

Triturus italicus (PERACCA, 1898) in
the Lepini Mountains:
new north-western range limit

Triturus italicus (PERACCA, 1898) is a newt endemic to southern Italy. The northern limits of its distribution are located in the province of Ancona (region of Marche) and in the Ausoni Mountains (region of Lazio) at the Adriatic and the Tyrrhenian side of the Apennines, respectively (BOLOGNA 2000) (fig. 1). The first sighting of *T. italicus* for Lazio was reported in 1981 (cf. BONIFAZI & CARPANETO 1990). To date about 50 breeding sites have been recorded for southern Lazio (CORSETTI, in press) while its presence has never been recorded for the province of Rome (RM) (cf. BOLOGNA 2000; CORSETTI 1994, 2000; CORSETTI & CAPULA 1992). In this note we report the first data on the presence of *T. italicus* in an area north of the Ausoni Mts.

Between 2003 and 2004, we found the newt in five localities between 700 and 1,020 m a.s.l. in the Lepini Mts.: One in the district of Castro dei Volsci (province of Frosinone), three in the district of Segni (RM) and one in the district of Montelanico (RM). We report here also on a record locality in the district of Carpineto Romano (RM) where the newt was found in spring 2004 (MARCO A. BOLOGNA, pers. comm.). In some of these localities more than one breeding site was present. In total we found eleven breeding sites where we observed adult males and females, as well as neotenic individuals. Our observations move the known north-western limit of the range of the Italian Newt about 35 km in a northward direction along the Tyrrhenian side of Apennines (fig.1). Moreover, the site at 1,020 m a.s.l. in the Lepini Mts. represents the new altitudinal record for this species in the region of Latium where it was not known from above 900 m a.s.l. before (BOLOGNA 2000). Among the reported breeding sites, ten were stony wells and only one was a natural pond; they were all located in pastures, with or without shrubs.

T. italicus is protected by regional law number 18 of 1988 and the newt's conservation is usually implemented by preserving

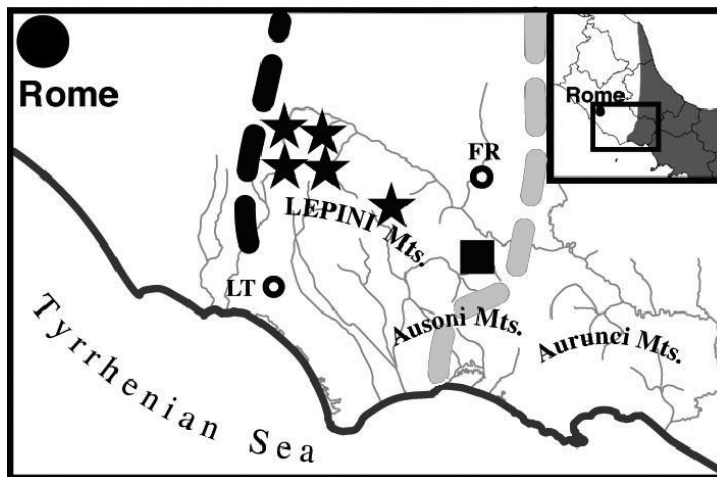


Fig. 1: The new stations of *Triturus italicus* (PERACCA, 1898) in the Lepini Mts. move the known north-western limit of the range of the Italian Newt about 35 km in a northward direction along the Tyrrhenian side of the Apennines (black dashed line). Gray dashed line - limit of distribution of the Italian Newt as previously known; ■ - locality of *T. italicus* in the province of Frosinone; ★ - localities in the province of Rome; FR - Frosinone; LT - Latina.

natural breeding sites. However, 60 % of *T. italicus* breeding sites in southern Lazio are artificial water bodies such as fountains, livestock watering ponds, stony wells and tanks (CORSETTI 2000, in press). During the last decades, the functionality and integrity of these artificial structures has been more and more compromised (i.e. collapses, filling processes, water drying up) by changes in the traditional methods of local livestock husbandry (CORSETTI in press). For this reason conservation problems should be expected to arise for the newt populations living in this area. Our data confirm the dependence, at a local level, of *T. italicus* populations from the integrity of artificial water bodies. Accordingly, we suggest the promotion of traditional management of the artificial water bodies used in local livestock husbandry as a more effective strategy for the conservation of *T. italicus* populations living in Southern Lazio.

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AUTHORS: Luigi CORSETTI, Via Adige 45, 04100 Latina, Italy < info@edizionibelvedere.it >; Roberto RAGNO, Via Triboniano 16, 04100 Latina, Italy; Antonio ROMANO, Dipartimento di Biologia, Università degli Studi di Roma "Tor Vergata", Via della Ricerca Scientifica 00133 Roma, Italy < antonioromano1@libero.it >.