

Amendment

When considering the significance of the colours of venomous reptiles (*Herpetol. Bull.* **95**, 25–30, 2006), I suggested that possibly the only adult venomous snakes with conspicuous coloration whose function might be to warn possible predators to leave them alone are sea snakes (*Pelamis platurus* and *Laticauda* spp.), coral snakes of the genus *Micrurus* and *Micruroides* and the burrowing Australian bandy bandy (*Vermicella anulata*). In this context I should also have mentioned the kraits (*Bungarus fasciatus* and *B. multicinctus*). The avoidance of coral snake banded patterns by free-ranging avian predators in Costa Rica was recorded by E. D. Brodie (1993, *Evolution* **47**, 227–235).

John Cloudsley-Thompson

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Here we report a case of illegal trade of Iberian amphibians and reptiles between European countries which may be of interest to readers of *The Herpetological Bulletin*, because it involves, amongst others, British traders.

In 1993, the *Boletín de la Asociación Herpetológica Española* (Bulletin of the Spanish Herpetological Society) published a new colour pattern of the Fire salamander (*Salamandra salamandra*) found in Tendi, a small valley of north-western Iberian Peninsula (Villanueva, 1993). Further papers gave more details concerning the singularity of this salamander population (Barrio & Fonoll, 1997; Günther, 1998; Pasmans & Keller, 2000). In the framework of the morphological and genetic complexity of this species in the Iberian Peninsula (e.g. Alcobendas *et al.*, 1994; Garcia-Paris *et al.*, 2003), Köhler & Steinfartz (2006) have recently described the Tendi population as a new subspecies, *Salamandra salamandra alfredschmidtii*. Alarmingly, the author of the original note describing the existence of this form (A. Villanueva) recently contacted the Asociación

Herpetológica Española (AHE, Spanish Herpetological Society) to report that salamanders from this area are on sale through internet websites based in the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy. Human perception of rare colour forms can accelerate illegal trade and precipitate their extinction, as has been theoretically and empirically demonstrated (Courchamp *et al.*, 2006).

The specific aquatic habitats of the Fire salamander in the Iberian Peninsula, as well as the restrictive climatic conditions of this region, make this species highly vulnerable to local extinction (Buckley & Alcobendas, 2002). Potential threats for the Iberian fire salamanders include habitat destruction and water pollution, as well as the loss of small reproductive ponds (Buckley & Alcobendas, 2002). Although recent visits to Asturias have extended the known distribution of salamanders with this unusual colour pattern to adjacent valleys in the Tendi area (Pasmans *et al.*, 2004), its overall range remains very small, and some parts have already lost suitable habitats due to cultivation and deforestation (Beukema, 2006). For this reason, removal of either the adults or larvae are likely to accelerate extinction of these small populations.

The Asociación Herpetológica Española absolutely disagrees with the illegal harvesting and exportation of wildlife, wherever and in whichever form it takes place. Although *Salamandra salamandra* is still not included in the Spanish List of Endangered Species (CNEA), its IUCN category in the last Red Book of the Spanish Herpetofauna is stated as Vulnerable (V) for the whole species and Near Threatened (NT) for the northern Spanish subspecies (Buckley & Alcobendas, 2002). The Fire salamander is also included in Annex III of the Bern Convention, and the Spanish law 4/89 forbids management and possession of wildlife without government permits. Unfortunately, this is not an isolate case as many other Iberian amphibians and reptiles are frequently offered on sale in European pet shops. Although some of these may have a CITES number that authorizes trade and selling outside the native country, we infer that many of these

animals have been illegally removed from natural habitats, hence increasing threats to their local survival. Herpetological Societies must encourage regional, national and international authorities to develop stronger environmental policies to urgently stop the illegal trade of fauna within the European borders.

Yours sincerely,

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