

First record of *Pelophylax bedriagae* (Amphibia; Ranidae) in the Suez Canal region, Egypt

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The Levant Green Frog, *Pelophylax bedriagae* (Fig. 1) was reported in Egypt for the first time by Marx (1968). In Sinai, green frogs were collected for the first time by the author in 1987. One specimen was deposited in the Natural History Museum, London (BMNH 1987.2323), and another later in the National Museum of Natural History, Paris (MNHN 1989.673). These specimens were collected from Rafah, at the extreme northeast of Sinai (N 31.19 E 34.13). Later, several individuals were collected from Sheikh Zowayid ~20 km W. Rafah (N 31.13 E 34.06). No more frogs were observed outside of this narrow range (Saleh, 1997; Baha El Din, 2006) until their

discovery on the east bank of the Suez Canal, which is the extreme western boundary of the Sinai Peninsula. In the Suez Canal zone, *P. bedriagae* was discovered for the first time near Ismailia City (N 30.38 E 32.15) on 22 June 2008, when some individuals were observed in a creek supporting a dense reed community. On 21 April 2009, a large number of frogs were observed in large natural swamps with reeds in the Homaydat village near Serapeum (N 30.27 E 32.17); the chorus heard during spring and early summer was noticeably intense. One of these frogs was captured and deposited in Paris (MNHN 2009.0252). On 28 April 2009, frogs were recorded in a natural swamp ~13 km south of Ismailia (N 30.32 E 32.14). In the Ferdan area ~10 km north of Ismailia (N 30.40, E 32.18), frogs were observed in creeks originating from the fresh water canal on

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Figure 1. *Pelophylax bedriagae*, Manzala Lake, N 31.18 E 31.53 (photo: Adel Ibrahim)

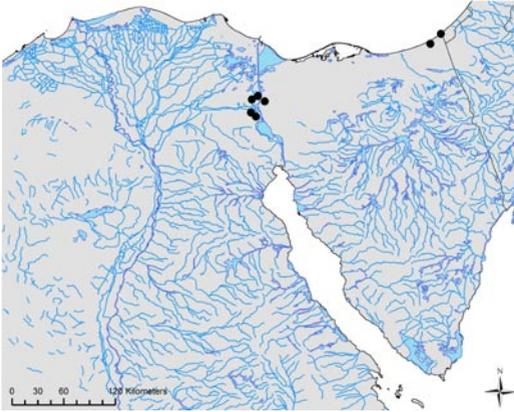


Figure 2. Distribution map of *Pelophylax bedriagae* in the Suez Canal region and Sinai, Egypt, with an indication of rivers and waterbodies. Exact coordinates of each locality are presented in the text.

25 June 2009. On the east bank of the Suez Canal, a few individuals were observed in a small pool with some reeds close to water pump station at At-Taqaddom village (N 30.37 E 32.22) during July 2010. This is the only place on the east bank of the Suez Canal that the author observed the species. As a result of this record, the range of *P. bedriagae* may be increased by about 180 km (straight line) from its nearest previously known locality in north-eastern Sinai (Fig. 2). Two reasons lie behind the failure to previously discover this frog in the Suez Canal area: firstly, this region has long been a site of military operations and most of it remains under military control.

This situation provided, for a long time, a disincentive for researchers to approach the Suez Canal and to search its banks for animals. The second reason is the recent appearance of natural swamps with suitable habitat for frogs (reed communities) that did not exist three decades previously. Examples include those in Serapeum, on the west bank of the Canal, and At-Taqaddom on the east bank. Also, the area in which the frog was first discovered near Ismailia was previously a desert. Reclamation of land and establishment of creeks in this area are the main reasons for the appearance of this frog. In conclusion, *P. bedriagae* was discovered on both banks of the Suez Canal as a result of the development of natural swamps and establishment of man-made irrigation channels. Most of these water bodies did not exist a few decades ago.

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