

# A case of cannibalism by an extra large female of *Malpolon monspessulanus* (Montpellier snake) in the Iberian Peninsula

Marc Franch<sup>1,2,\*</sup> and Olatz San Sebastián<sup>1,2</sup>

Cannibalism is a relatively common trophic strategy among snakes (Polis and Myers, 1985). Many cases of cannibalism have been reported, but none of them represents a significant percentage of their diet. In the Iberian Peninsula, cases of cannibalism have been reported in *Macroprotodon mauritanicus* (Capellà et al., 2011), *Vipera latastei* (Martinez-Freiria et al., 2006), as well as in *Malpolon monspessulanus* (Valverde, 1967; Díaz-Paniagua, 1976; Pleguezuelos, 1998 and Recuero et al., 2010).

*Malpolon monspessulanus* is considered an opportunistic euryphagous predator (Valverde, 1967; Pleguezuelos, 1998) whose diet composition is determined by prey availability during the annual activity period (Díaz-Paniagua, 1976; Corti et al., 2001).

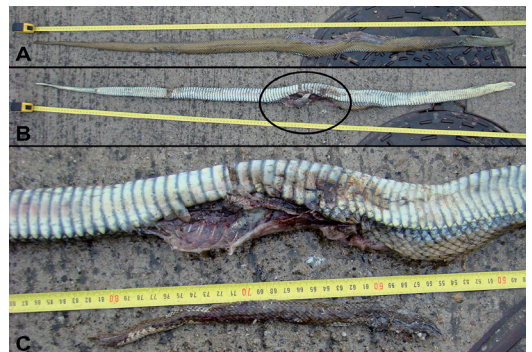
On 3 May 2010, we observed a roadkilled individual *M. monspessulanus* on an industrial area near the small village of Riudarenes, Spain (41.8107°N, 2.7234°E; WGS84). The specimen was sexed as a female with SVL= 1298 mm and total length= 1490 mm (Figure 1A and 1B).

The snake had an open wound on the central area of body which revealed part of the stomach contents, as a result of roadkill. After emptying the stomach contents, it appeared a partially digested fragment of a colubrid snake (270 mm) (Figure 1C). This fragment was identified as part of a sub-adult of *M. monspessulanus* without possibility of sexing. Identification was based on color and number of dorsal scales rows and its longitudinal depression in the center. Iberian specimens invariably exhibit 19 rows in the center of the body (Pleguezuelos, 1997).

The data presented here contributes to the improvement of knowledge about cannibalism in the species from a geographic area where information lacked on trophic strategy, and reports a female of exceptional large size, given that maximum size described in the Iberian Peninsula was SLV=988 mm (head and body length) (Feriche et al., 2008).

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**Figure 1.** Female of Montpellier snake (*Malpolon monspessulanus*) roadkilled on industrial area. A) Dorsal view. B) Ventral view: in the stomach area (circle) it shows partially the prey. C) Detail of partially digested *M. monspessulanus* with usually sub-adult coloration (scale in metric system).

1 Department of Animal Biology (Vertebrates), University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

2 Aranzadi Society of Sciences. Donosti, Spain

\*Corresponding author; e-mail: m.franch.q@gmail.com

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