

Scientific note

First record of the terrestrial nemertean *Geonemertes pelaensis* in Austria, discovered in a heated greenhouse in Vienna

(Hoplonemertea: Prosorhochmidae)

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Geonemertes pelaensis Semper, 1863 is one of only 14 known species of terrestrial nemerteans (Gastineau et al. 2026), most of them being endemic to islands. Only three species, *Leptonemertes chalicophora*, *Argonemertes dendyi* and *Geonemertes pelaensis*, have a wider distribution. *Geonemertes pelaensis* has colonized many subtropical and tropical regions, including numerous islands, likely through the trade of plants (Moore et al. 2001, Morffe et al. 2020). For continental Europe, *G. pelaensis* has so far only been recorded from heated greenhouses in Potsdam and Frankfurt am Main in Germany (Freyhof & Janke 2024; <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/333434079>, 2023; <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/266067072>, 2025).

At around 9 am on October 15th, 2025, two specimens (field numbers TGIC_14A and TGIC_14B) were found in the heated greenhouse of the crocodile pavilion (48°10'59.995"N, 16°18'5.345"E) of the Zoo Schönbrunn in Vienna, Austria, which is part of the aquarium and terrarium house. TGIC_14A (Fig. 1) was found actively crawling on a gardening fleece, and TGIC_14B on the bottom of a flowerpot. TGIC_14A lost several posterior body parts before preservation. Both specimens were preserved in 70% ethanol and will be deposited in the Bavarian State's Collection of Zoology (ZSM-SNSB). A segment of the cytochrome oxidase subunit 1 (COI) gene of TGIC_14A was sequenced for molecular identification, mostly following the protocol of Morffe et al. (2020). The DNA sequence had a length of 636 bp (GenBank accession number PZ008408) and was 100% identical to most other *G. pelaensis* sequences available in GenBank, which strongly confirmed the preliminary identification based on the photos.

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Fig. 1. *Geonemertes pelaensis* (TGIC_14A) from a greenhouse in Vienna, Austria (right: anterior end with eyes, left: posterior end).

References

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