

Scientific note

First case of infestation of the Sahara Green frog *Pelophylax saharicus* by the Dragon leech *Hirudo troctina* in Morocco

(Amphibia: Ranidae and Annelida: Hirudinea)

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During a routine hydrobiological survey conducted in the Moulouya River basin in northeastern Morocco, an individual of *Pelophylax saharicus* parasitised by a leech was captured in a fishing net in Lower Moulouya River (34°51'11.8" N, 2°42'26.4" W) on 9 May 2025 (Fig. 1). Following the extraction of the leech and further examination, it was identified as the Dragon leech *Hirudo troctina* Johnson, 1816, representing the first documented instance of a host-parasite relationship between these two species. For further information on identification criteria, distribution and habitat preferences see Mabrouki et al. (2019).

Although they are often considered to be primarily hematophagous on mammalian blood, leeches belonging to the genus *Hirudo* Linnaeus, 1758 can feed on several other vertebrate hosts, such as fish and amphibians (Vecchioni et al. 2025). Scarce information is currently available on the diet of *Hirudo troctina*; however, it has been reported to feed on the fish *Salmo trutta* (Linnaeus, 1758), the newt *Pleurodeles nebulosus* (Guichenot, 1850) and the toad *Bufo spinosus* (Daudin, 1803) (Merabet et al. 2017, Merabet & Karar 2021, Vecchioni et al. 2025). Based on the number and size of the denticles on its jaws, it has been hypothesised that *Hirudo troctina* primarily feeds on amphibians (Kovalenko & Utevsky 2015). However, this preference requires corroboration, as the species is more likely to exhibit opportunistic feeding behaviour.

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Fig. 1. *Hirudo troctina* feeding on an adult *Pelophylax saharicus* in Morocco.

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