

Scientific note

Clutch size and a new prey item for the Yellow-throated garter snake *Thamnophis pulchrilatus* (Cope, 1885) in Tlaxcala, Mexico

(Squamata, Colubridae)

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On May 25th, 2022 we collected an adult female of *Thamnophis pulchrilatus* (Cope, 1885) (Museo de Zoología de la Facultad de Ciencias, MZFC 36445; snout-vent length = 545 mm, tail length = 115 mm; Fig. 1A) at 18:17 h in the municipality of El Carmen Tequexquitla, Tlaxcala, Mexico (19.32705° N, 97.63568° W; 2350 m a. s. l.). At the moment of the capture, the snake regurgitated a partially digested individual of the salamander *Ambystoma velasci* (MZFC 36450) (Fig. 1B). We observed that the snake was gravid, so we took data after preservation about the weight and length of the snake and its embryos, and also of the *Ambystoma* prey item (Fig. 1B). The embryos were in a very early stage of development, according to Zehr (1962). The specimens were euthanized with an overdose of 10 % pentobarbital and were preserved with 96 % ethanol.

We found a total of 15 embryos (1.75–2.03 g, $\bar{x}$ = 1.88 g weight; 14.71–21.72 mm, $\bar{x}$ = 17.99 mm length; 13.81–16.77 mm, $\bar{x}$ = 14.78 mm width; Fig. 1C) occupying 18.61 % of the total mass of the snake (109.6 g). Meanwhile, the salamander weighs 13.72 g corresponding to 9.05 % of the total mass (Fig. 1B). The embryos and the prey item together occupy 27.66 % of the total mass of the snake at the moment it was caught.

The *Ambystoma* found in the snake's stomach represents the second record of a salamander of the family Ambystomatidae in its diet (Fraustros-Sandoval et al. 2019). The *A. velasci* was already metamorphosed (Fig. 1B), since it exhibited a distinctive spotted pattern, no tail fin, and the hind limbs lacked interdigital membranes. Data about the clutch size of *T. pulchrilatus* was only known for one female collected in June at the Valley of Mexico that gave birth to seven individuals (García-Vázquez et al. 2012). This study extends the range of the clutch size to 7–15.

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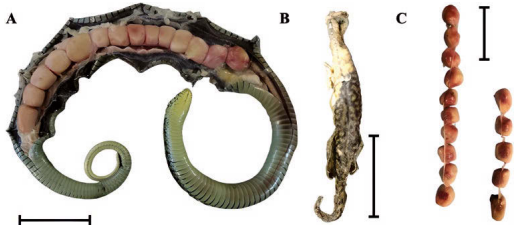


Fig. 1. A. Female of *Thamnophis pulchrilatus* (MZFC 36445). B. Prey item (*Ambystoma velasci*, MZFC 36450). C. Embryos from MZFC 36445. Scale bars = 5 cm.

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