

FIRST EVIDENCE ON THE OCCURRENCE
OF THE GREEK NEWT *LISSOTRITON GRAECUS*
AND THE AESCULAPIAN SNAKE *ZAMENIS LONGISSIMUS*
ON EVIA ISLAND, GREECE

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With an area of about 3680 km² and a length of around 180 km, Evia (Euboea) is the largest Greek island being second only to Crete. It is located centrally in the Aegean Sea and in close proximity to the Greek mainland, from which it is separated by a narrow strait (about 40 m distance at its narrowest point). It hosts a huge variety of habitats, ranging from wetlands at sea level to maquis, extensive forests and high altitude meadows. Due to sea level changes during the Quaternary climatic fluctuations (Rohling et al. 2014), the last time Evia became insular was only recently, around 5,500 years before present times (Mariolakos & Bantekas 2002). The combination of the island's size, proximity to the mainland, large habitat variety and recent separation from the mainland, implies a faunal composition very similar to that of the adjoining mainland. Despite Evia being located very close to Athens city, the capital of Greece, its fauna is still understudied. To date, only a few thorough herpetofaunal surveys have been documented in the literature, currently counting a list of 35 amphibian and reptile species for the island (Boettger 1891, Werner 1937, 1938, Chondropoulos 1989, Valakos et al. 2008, Sillero et al. 2014, Christopoulos et al. 2019, Dufresnes et al. 2019). In this note, evidence about the occurrence of the Greek Newt *Lissotriton graecus* (Wolterstorff, 1906) and the Aesculapian Snake *Zamenis longissimus* (Laurenti, 1768) on the island of Evia, are being presented for the first time.

During a one-day expedition in the northernmost part of Evia, on 19th May 2021, approximately 2.5 km north of Istiaia, a juvenile Aesculapian Snake was spotted crossing the road around 23:00 (Fig. 1A). After the snake was captured, sampled for DNA and photographed (photographic vouchers are deposited in the Natural History Museum of Crete [NHMC]: NHMC80.3.32.13), it was then released back at the site of capture.

A few hours later, during the same night, around 00:30, approximately 1 km south of Kanatadika, more than 20 larvae of Greek Newt were spotted (Fig. 1B and 1C) in a flooded drainage channel, together with tens of Common Tree Frog tadpoles (*Hyla arborea*). The drainage channel was located along a crop field at about 2 m.a.s.l. Samples and photographs of three individuals were obtained and deposited in the NHMC (voucher number: NHMC80.2.4.6). The exact locations are withheld herein to protect those populations from poaching.

Two new herpetofaunal records for Evia Island

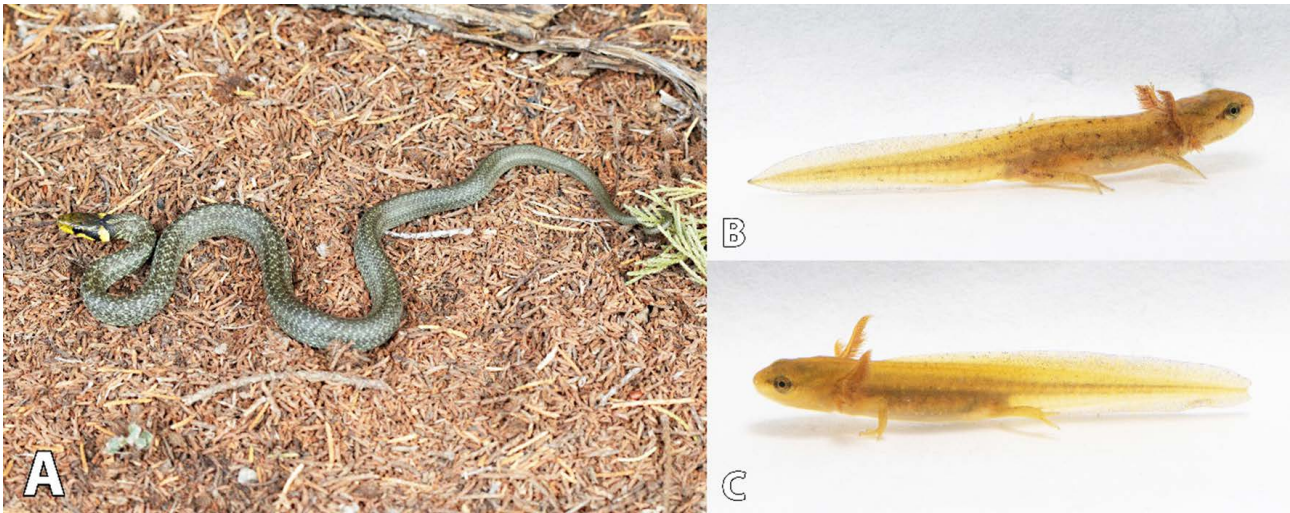


Fig 1. Evia Island, Greece. **A.** Aesculapian Snake *Zamenis longissimus*, juvenile, Istiaia valley. **B.** - **C.** Greek Newts *Lissotriton graecus*, larvae, south of Kanatadika (all photos by the author).

The whole valley of Istiaia, where both species were found, is a flat area that consists mainly of annual and arboreal crops usually surrounded by drainage channels, hedgerows and dirt roads. A large number of both natural and artificial ponds occur in the area, whereas two large wetlands and a river outfall lie at the shores of the Istiaia valley (N and NW of Istiaia town).

Those two new species records, together with the recent one of the Javelin Sand Boa *Eryx jaculus* (Linnaeus, 1758) by Christopoulos et al. (2019), enhance further the herpetofaunal list of the island (37 species in total), expand both species' known distribution and, at the same time, indicate how faunistically underexplored Evia still is.

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