

Short Communication

New records of the Dice snake, *Natrix tessellata*, in the Suez Canal zone and Sinai

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Abstract.—Ten years of herpetological surveys in the Suez Canal zone revealed that *Natrix tessellata* was most common in fresh water irrigation canals. It is recorded herein for the first time in Port Said and Suez provinces and discovered in Sinai.

Key words. Dice snake, *Natrix tessellata*, Suez Canal, Sinai, new records

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The Dice snake (*Natrix tessellata*; Figs. 1 and 2) was long known from the northern part of the Nile Delta (Anderson 1898; Flower 1933; Marx 1968; Saleh 1997), and its distribution extended in the lower extremes of the River Nile as far as Al Wasta in Bani Suef province (Baha El Din 2011). However, no record of *N. tessellata* was known from Sinai, and its distribution in the Suez Canal zone was lacking.

The Dice snake (*Natrix tessellata*) was first reported from the Suez Canal zone by Werner (1983) referring to an individual collected by Tortonese in 1948 from Qassasin, 35 km west of the Suez Canal in the Ismailia province, and two other individuals, one found eight km south of Ismailia and the other, west of Bitter Lakes. Recently, *N. tessellata* was reported from several different localities in the Suez Canal area (all in the Ismailia region). Stein and Helmy (1994) reported the snake from Ismailia gardens; they also recorded an individual from Bahr Al Baqar, a town in Sharqiya province, not Port Said province as they claimed (the town is located 35 km west of the Suez Canal). Two snakes were collected by the author from Ferdan (10 km N. Ismailia), and Ain Ghosain (15 km S. Ismailia) and deposited in the Muséum National d'Historire Naturelle, Paris (MNHN 2000.5147 and 2000.5148). Baha El Din (2011) reported this species 48 km south of Port Said and associated it with Port Said; however, a locality at the stated distance actually is in Ismailia province. A ten-year herpetological survey in the Suez Canal region by the author revealed that *N. tessellata* is wide-spread in fresh water irrigation canals, which constitute a huge irrigation web along the Suez Canal west bank, from Port Said to Suez (Table 1 and Fig. 3), thus documenting its first record from both Port

Said and Suez provinces. At Al-Ganayen of Suez, it approaches the Red Sea within five km. The Dice snake is well-known to Suez Canal farmers as a non-venomous snake; however, many people still continue to kill them unnecessarily.

The Dice snake was transported to the east bank of the Suez Canal through the fresh water canal connecting west to east (Sinai) at Déversoir. At Meet Abul Koum Al-Jadidah, a road-killed snake was first observed in 2008 documenting its first occurrence in Sinai. This species is now widely distributed in fresh water canals irrigating newly cultivated lands east of Bitter Lakes in Sinai.

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Figure 1. *Natrix tessellata*, Ismailia city, 7 August 2007. Photo: Adel A. Ibrahim.



Figure 2. *Natrix tessellata*, Déversoir, 24 May 2008. Photo: Adel A. Ibrahim.

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Table 1. Locations of *Natrix tessellata* in the Suez Canal zone and Sinai.

| | Location | Date | Coordinates |
|----|-------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|
| 1 | 8 km S. Port Said | 25.5.2009 | 31° 10' 54" N, 32° 18' 12" E |
| 2 | Abu Khalifa Ezbet Attawwab | 31.7.2002 | 30° 46' 30" N, 32° 15' 41" E |
| 3 | Km 17, N.W. Ismailia | 13.5.2009 | 30° 44' 00" N, 32° 13' 42" E |
| 4 | Qaryat Assama'ana | 9.5.2005 | 30° 43' 23" N, 32° 15' 34" E |
| 5 | Ferdan | 11.5.2000 | 30° 39' 42" N, 32° 19' 49" E |
| 6 | Km 8, N.W. Ismailia | 25.5.2009 | 30° 39' 41" N, 32° 15' 31" E |
| 7 | Km 6, N.W. Ismailia | 24.6.2008 | 30° 38' 35" N, 32° 15' 07" E |
| 8 | 4 km N.W. Ismailia | 23.7.2004 | 30° 37' 43" N, 32° 14' 30" E |
| 9 | Ismailia City | 7.8.2007 | 30° 35' 19" N, 32° 16' 56" E |
| 10 | Al-Manayef | 5.3.2006 | 30° 33' 13" N, 32° 11' 54" E |
| 11 | Ain Ghosain | 16.7.1999 | 30° 30' 45" N, 32° 18' 13" E |
| 12 | Meet Abul Koum Al-Jadidah, S. | 25.5.2008 | 30° 25' 28" N, 32° 24' 47" E |
| 13 | Al-Aqqadah | 1.6.2001 | 30° 26' 01" N, 32° 20' 13" E |
| 14 | Déversoir | 24.5.2008 | 30° 25' 33" N, 32° 20' 49" E |
| 15 | Jeneeva | 8.5. 2002 | 30° 12' 23" N, 32° 25' 43" E |
| 16 | Al-Ganayen, Suez | 31.5.2001 | 29° 59' 53" N, 32° 33' 07" E |

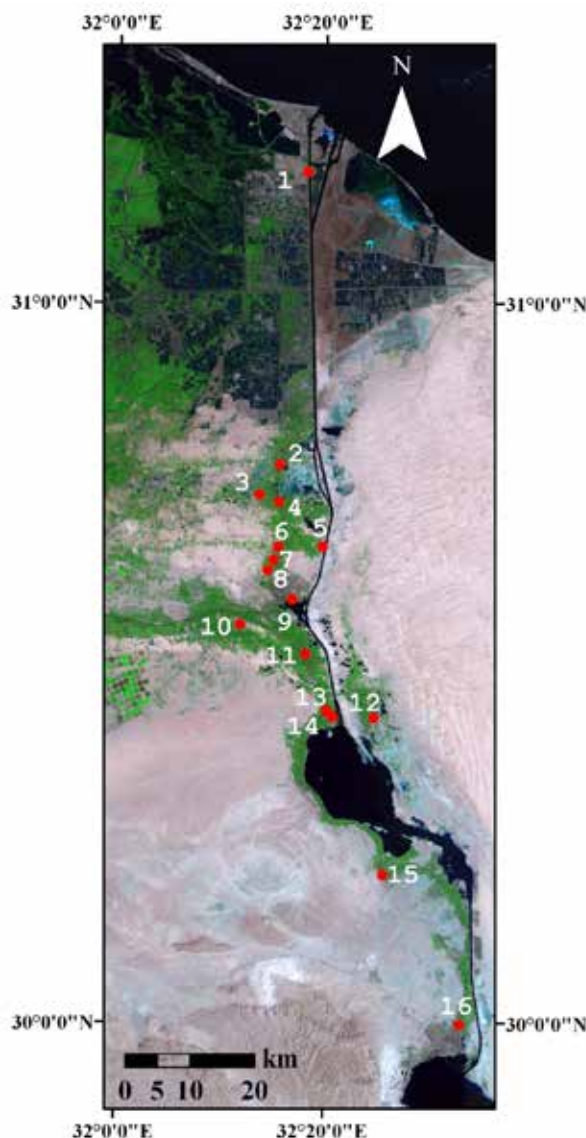


Figure 3. Distribution of *N. tessellata* in the Suez Canal zone and Sinai.



ADEL IBRAHIM is associate professor of zoology (herpetologist), was previously head of the Department of Environmental Sciences, Suez Canal University, Suez, Egypt, and is currently a visiting professor at Ha'il University, Saudia Arabia. Adel has published 33 scientific papers (all in the field of herpetology), and currently two chapters in *Amphibians of Egypt and Amphibians of Libya* (In press). Adel has researched the herpetofauna of Sinai since 1987 and the Suez Canal zone for more than 10 years. Adel is an avid photographer having contributed about 40 photos of reptile species to the Reptile Database: <http://www.reptile-database.org/>. He is member of the International Herpetological Committee Advisory Board 2005-2012 (elected at the 5th World Congress of Herpetology, South Africa).