

# B O C A G I A N A

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## THE WARTY NEWT (*TRITURUS CRISTATUS*) OF THE AZORES

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In the list of vertebrate animals of the Azores, compiled by Staffan Ulfstrand in 1961, only one amphibian is entered: the edible frog, *Rana esculenta* Linnaeus 1758 (or, according to Mertens & Vermuth, 1960: *Rana ridibunda perezi* Seoane, 1885). The edible frog does not belong to the original fauna of the islands but was at one time introduced there, possibly for culinary purposes. It can now be found all over the archipelago.

However, Senhor J. M. A. Cabral, the director of the Museu «Carlos Machado», has informed me about a species of newt living on São Miguel. He has observed its presence there since 1922. My examination of one specimen has shown it to be the warty newt, *Triturus cristatus* (Laurenti, 1768). This discovery was a great surprise to me, as the warty newt does not exist at a closer distance from São Miguel than France or England. Furthermore, it must have been introduced on the island by man the same as every non-flying vertebrate living there. When this may have happened is impossible to say; the only thing we know is that, according to Senhor Cabral, it obviously existed there in 1922. Its occurrence on São Miguel seems rather mysterious. Contrary to the case of the edible frog it is difficult to find any comprehensible reason for introducing it. It has probably arrived there by accident, for example when different fresh water fishes were naturalized on the island, but this is mere guesswork.

Unfortunately the specimen, which I had the opportunity to examine was in an unsuitable condition for determination of the subspecies. There are four European subspecies of the warty newt. The

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typical form is spread over North and Middle Europe. *Triturus cristatus carnifex* (Laurenti 1768) is found in Austria, Northern Yugoslavia, Southern Switzerland and Northern Italy. The very slender *T. c. dobrogicus* (Kiritzescu 1903) lives in the Eastern Balkan, while the great *T. c. karelinii* (Strauch 1870) ranges from Macedonia to the Crimea, the Caucasus, Asia Minor and Northern Iran.

It is consequently established that for the moment two species of amphibians are known to be living on the Azores: the edible frog, *Rana esculenta*, which is common all over the islands, and the warty newt, *Triturus cristatus*, which is only found in São Miguel. Of reptiles the Madeiran wall-lizard, *Lacerta dugesii dugesii* Milne-Edwards 1829, is known from São Miguel, Faial and Graciosa. Finally a marine turtle, the Loggerhead *Caretta caretta* Linnaeus is common during the warmer season in the sea around the archipelago.

#### RESUMO

Mais uma espécie de anfíbio foi encontrado nos Açores, a saber um *Triturus cristatus*. São Miguel é a única ilha onde tem sido encontrado.

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