NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

CAUDATA — SALAMANDERS

***AFGHANODON MUSTERSI* (Afghanistan Stream Salamander). PREDATION.** *Afghanodon mustersi*, family Hynobiidae, is the only member of the genus and one of the most endangered species of amphibians in Eurasia. Human activities such as habitat alteration, drainage, and grazing are potential threats for this species (Stuart et al. 2008. Threatened Amphibians of the World. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, Spain. 776 pp.) The species inhabits high-elevation streams (above 2400 m) and is known from several localities in the central-eastern Hindu Kush mountain range in Afghanistan (Reilly 1983. J. Herpetol. 17:1–9; Wagner et al. 2016. Proc. California Acad. Sci. 63:457–565). Today, this species is virtually unprotected due to continuing war activities in the country. With an unstable situation in the region and the presence of landmines, the scenario for protecting these salamanders has worsened. Most information about this rare species comes from the Paghman Stream drainage in the Paghman Mountains., near Kabul, Afghanistan (Reilly 1983, *op. cit.*).

We recently visited a stream in the Paghman Mountains to find a population of *A. mustersi* (5 August 2019; 34.614°N, 68.912°E, WGS 84; 2633 m elev.). The stream was cold and fast flowing with small pools formed naturally along the edges. During our search for salamanders in this habitat (1325 h), we observed a snake (ca. 100 cm) looking for prey between the stones and grasses alongside the stream. The snake, later identified as *Hemorrhois ravergieri*, has been previously recorded in the Paghman Mountains (Reilly 1983, *op. cit.*; Wagner et al. 2016, *op. cit.*). After 10–15 min of observation, the snake captured and consumed one adult *A. mustersi* directly in the stream and immediately went back to the grassy area adjacent to the stream. This observation is ecologically important for both observed species; *H. ravergieri* has never been reported hunting salamanders in aquatic habitats and this is the first report of *A. mustersi* predation by another vertebrate. It confirms the assumption of Reilly (1983, *op. cit.*) that *H. ravergieri* was a possible predator of *A. mustersi*. Here, we establish the initial predator list for the endangered *A. mustersi*.

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***AMBYSTOMA MABEEI* (Mabee's Salamander). ABERRANT COLORATION.** Albinos and albino variants have been reported for at least 11 species of *Ambystoma* (Palmer and Braswell 1980. Brimleyana 3:49–52; Bechtel 1995. Reptile and Amphibian Variants: Colors, Patterns, and Scales. Krieger Publishing Company, Malabar, Florida. 206 pp.; Petranka 1998. Salamanders of the United States and Canada. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 587 pp.). Here, we report an *Ambystoma mabeei* albino variant.

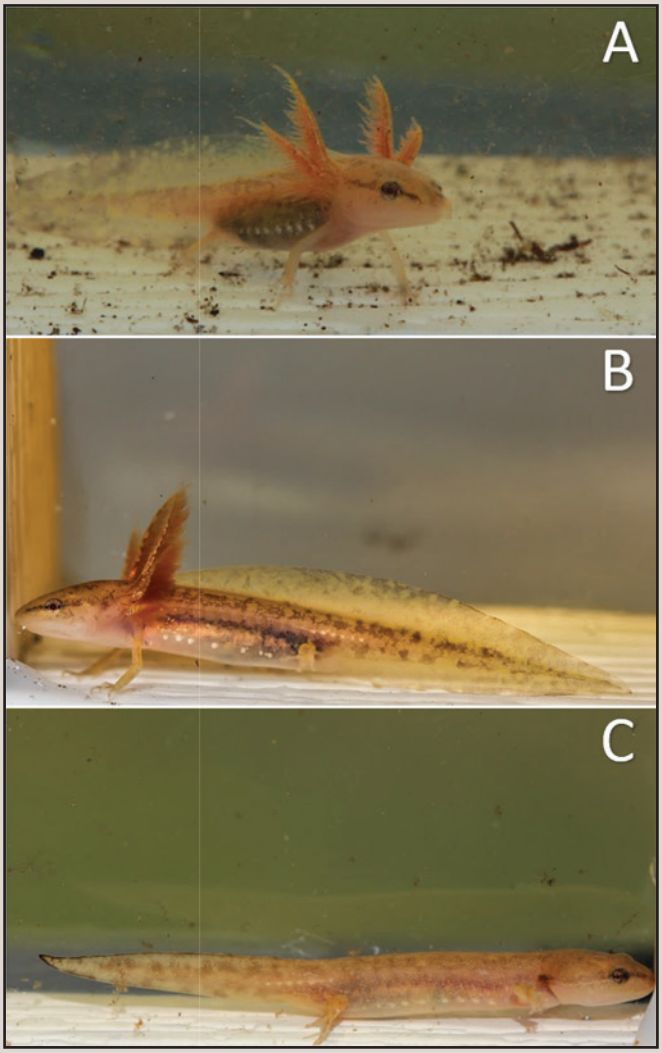

FIG. 1. Hypomelanistic *Ambystoma mabeei* on A) 5 March 2019; B) 7 April 2019; and C) 8 May 2019.

At 1050 h, 4 March 2019, we captured a 35 mm (total length), abnormally-pigmented larval *A. mabeei* (Fig. 1A) during a dipnet survey of a 10-cm deep pool within a drying, isolated Pond Cypress (*Taxodium ascendens*) wetland in Berkeley County, South Carolina, USA (precise location withheld). This was the only aberrant individual observed among numerous normally colored *A. mabeei* larvae that were captured and released. The atypical larva was collected and maintained in an aquarium with