

**REDISCOVERY OF *Melanophryniscus macrogranulosus* (ANURA, BUFONIDAE), AN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF AMPHIBIA FROM THE STATE OF RIO GRANDE DO SUL, BRAZIL**

*Melanophryniscus macrogranulosus* was described by BRAUN (1973) based on nine specimens collected in 1960 by Thales de Lema, and deposited at the Museu Rio-Grandense de História Natural (now Museu de Ciências Naturais da Fundação Zoobotânica do Rio Grande do Sul). The type-locality was indicated as “Torres, RS, Brasil” without comments on the specific locality. All specimens were used in the species description; that is the holotype and eight paratypes, which comprise the only known specimens.

In 1997 the municipality of Torres was divided in two, resulting in the municipality of Dom Pedro de Alcântara, and hence to a doubt on the precise type-locality of the species. On account of this division, Garcia and Vinciprova (2003) extended the type-locality to “Torres or Dom Pedro de Alcântara” [translation by the authors], but discovered, by asking the collector of the type-series, the precise place where they were found: the entrance of a cave at the margin of the BR-101 highway. This place is actually known as Morro da Gruta (29°24’20” S, 37°51’03” W), situated in the locality of Porto Fagundes, Fourth District of Porto Colônia, municipality of Dom Pedro de Alcântara, being the precise type-locality of the species.

After the original description of *M. macrogranulosus* (BRAUN, 1973), no more data on the species was obtained (except GARCIA; VINCIPROVA, 2003), nor more specimens found. The scarcity of data, the apparent rarity of the species, and its endemic status to Rio Grande do Sul led the Brazilian Government to include the species among the “critically endangered” list (Ministério do Meio Ambiente, 2003). Garcia and Vinciprova (2003) included the species in the “red data book” of the Rio Grande do Sul State under the category “Endangered: Vulnerable”. In addition, these authors mentioned that *M. macrogranulosus* could be the most endangered anuran species of Rio Grande do Sul, and considered even the possibility that the species is already extinct.

Here we report the rediscovery of the species, 44 years after the finding of the type-series. Our study is based on a juvenile specimen of *M. macrogranulosus* (Fig. 1) collected by Rafael Becker and Gabriela Paise on 30 April 2004 at Barra do Ouro, municipality of Maquiné, Rio Grande do Sul, and donated alive to the Herpetological Collection of the Museu de Ciências e Tecnologia of the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (MCP), where the specimen was preserved and stored (MCP 7943).

After the examination of the holotype (MRCN 1694) and the paratypes (MRCN 1693, MRCN 1695, MRCN 1696, MRCN 1697, MRCN 1698, MRCN 1699, MRCN 1701, MRCN 1702), we concluded that the MCP 7943 is the smallest known specimen, measuring 25.8 mm of snout-vent length. It is very similar to the specimens of the type-series, although its dorsal coloration is dark green instead of “almost black” (BRAUN, 1973). Although Braun’s (1973) original description had been based on fixed individuals, he presented the live coloration of the specimens, possibly following annotations taken at the time of collecting. The frontal swelling, a putative synapomorphy of the *M. tumifrons* group (BALDO; BASSO, in press), is very small in MCP 7943, probably because of its age. The ventral pattern is very similar to that observed in the specimens of the type-series, as happens with the pale blotches (red in live specimens) in the inner portion of the forearms.

The area from where all specimens came is covered by coastal Atlantic Forest, one of the smallest and the most threatened ecosystem in Rio Grande do Sul (FONTANA et al., 2003), and listed as a world biodiversity hotspot (Myers et al., 2000). The rediscovery of *M. macrogranulosus* here reported reinforces the importance of this area as a remnant of relict species, and call for a more rigorous control from governmental authorities to maintain its integrity.

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**Fig. 1.** Specimen of *Melanophryniscus macrogranulosus* (MCP 7943) from Barra do Ouro, Maquiné, RS. **A** – dorsal view (photo by Márcio Borges-Martins); **B** – ventral view.

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