

## AMPHIBIA: CAUDATA: PLETHODONTIDAE

## BOLITOGLOSSA SPONGAI

## Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

Barrio-Amorós, C.L. and O. Fuentes-Ramos. 2004. *Bolitoglossa spongai*.

***Bolitoglossa spongai* Barrio-Amorós and Fuentes-Ramos**

*Bolitoglossa* sp.: Barrio-Amorós 1996:29.

*Bolitoglossa orestes*: Barrio-Amorós 1998:62. Part.

*Bolitoglossa spongai* Barrio-Amorós and Fuentes-Ramos 1999:

11. Type locality, "La Carbonera, Fila la Cuchilla, Estado Mérida, 2200 m, 8°38'N, 71°23'W, Venezuela." Holotype, Museo de Biología de la Universidad Central de Venezuela (MBUCV) 6570, adult female (SVL = 46.4 mm), collected by Ángela Rosa Delgado de González on 12 December 1982 (examined by authors).

• **CONTENT.** This species is monotypic.

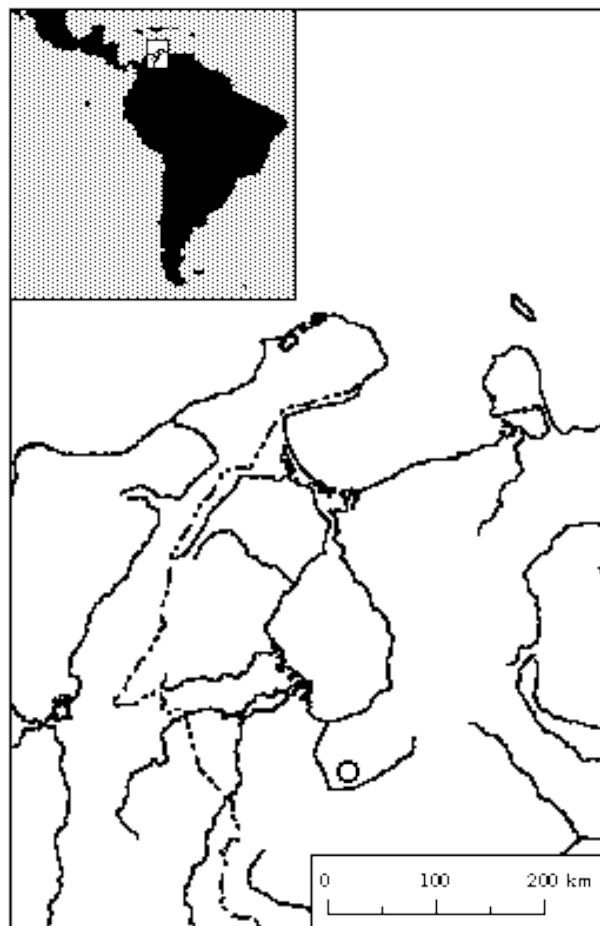
• **DEFINITION.** Adult *Bolitoglossa spongai* are small to moderately sized bolitoglossine salamanders with SVL ranging from 34–46.4 mm. Sexual dimorphism is not apparent, although males possess hedonic glands. The snout is short (1/5 of the head length) and round anteriorly. The nostrils are very small. The mouth contains 23–52 maxillary teeth and 3–16 vomerine teeth. The skin of all body surfaces is smooth. The arms and legs are short. Webbing on the hands and feet is almost full, leaving free only the terminal phalanx of each digit. The tips of the digits are well differentiated, with rounded tips. The tail is about 100% of the SVL and round in cross-section.

The dorsum in living salamanders is brown-orange to pale brown or yellowish. The flanks are much darker, gray to almost black in some specimens. A series of metallic or ivory small flecks are present, usually becoming larger on the tail.

• **DIAGNOSIS.** *Bolitoglossa spongai* is readily distinguished from other Venezuelan and Andean salamanders by the following characters (*B. spongai* in parentheses): *Bolitoglossa orestes* has a lower number of maxillary teeth, mean = 17 (32); relatively smaller size, mean SVL = 38.8 mm (40.3 mm); very dark coloration (lighter, brownish to yellowish); and a different cranial osteology (see Barrio-Amorós and Fuentes-Ramos 1999). *Bolitoglossa borburata* is larger, mean SVL = 44.6 mm (40.3 mm); has less extensive webbing on hands and feet; higher number of maxillary teeth,  $\bar{x} = 57$  (32); distinctive coloration; and apparently arboreal habits (terrestrial). *Bolitoglossa adspersa* is larger, mean SVL = 49.9 mm (40.3 mm), but less robust; has fewer maxillary teeth,  $\bar{x} = 27$  (32); and less extensive webbing on the hands and feet. *Bolitoglossa savagei* is larger, mean SVL = 44.1 mm (40.3), and has more maxillary teeth,  $\bar{x} = 48$  (32). *Bolitoglossa altamazonica* has fewer teeth,  $\bar{x} = 15$  (32), and a restricted allopatric distribution in lowland Amazonia. *Bolitoglossa guaramacalensis* is much larger, SVL to 69.4 mm (46.4 mm); more maxillary teeth, 49–67 (23–52); and moderately webbed hands and feet (almost full).

• **DESCRIPTIONS.** Barrio-Amorós and Fuentes-Ramos (1999) listed morphological characteristics of the holotype and provided a detailed description of adults and subadults, including variation in color patterns. They also provided a description of cranial osteology of this species, *B. borburata*, and *B. orestes*.

• **ILLUSTRATIONS.** A color photograph of an adult (unsexed) is in Barrio (1996). Barrio-Amorós and Fuentes-Ramos (1999)



**MAP.** Distribution of *Bolitoglossa spongai*: the circle marks the type locality and the immediate vicinity from which the species is known.



**FIGURE.** An adult *Bolitoglossa spongai* from the vicinity of the type locality.

provided drawings of the lateral side of the head, a dorsal view of the skull, and dorsal views of a hand and foot.

• **DISTRIBUTION.** *Bolitoglossa spongai* is known from the type locality (2200 m) and surroundings, like Finca Cree, Terrains of the Universidad de los Andes (ULA) in San Eusebio, all in La Carbonera region, reaching an elevation of 2800 m at Páramo El Tambor. It is apparently endemic to the northwestern versant of the Sierra de la Culata in Mérida, Venezuela. *Bolitoglossa spongai* is a terrestrial inhabitant of mossy terrain in cloud forest, usually found under logs and stones, even in drier sub-páramo habitats. It has been never found in bromeliads or epiphytes on trees. The distribution of the species and the other known Venezuelan species of *Bolitoglossa* was discussed by Barrio-Amorós and Fuentes-Ramos (1999).

• **FOSSIL RECORD.** None.

• **PERTINENT LITERATURE.** The literature pertaining to *B. spongai* is sparse, consisting of the original description (Barrio-Amorós y Fuentes-Ramos 1999), a photograph in Barrio (1996, as *Bolitoglossa* sp.), notation regarding its conservation status (Barrio-Amorós 2001, see **Remark**), mention in an online list (Frost 2000), and comparisons with recently described *B. guaramaca-lensis* (Schargel et al. 2002).

• **REMARK.** Based on its apparently restricted distribution, Barrio-Amorós (2001) suggested that the species be considered as potentially endangered. However, recent fieldwork indicates that, although secretive, the species is not rare in the region around the type locality.

• **ETYMOLOGY.** The specific epithet is a patronym honoring Manuel González Sponga, a Venezuelan naturalist and arachnologist. His wife collected the type series in the course of an expedition looking for opilionid arachnids.

• **COMMENT.** The English common name for this species should be “Sponga’s salamander,” the Spanish common name, “salamandra de Sponga.”

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**CÉSAR L. BARRO-AZORÓS and OSWALDO FUENTES-RAMOS**, Fundación Andígena A, Apartado Postal 210, 5101-A Mérida, Venezuela.

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