

## *Trachycephalus typhonius* (Hylidae, Lophiohylini): Necrophilia and brief comments on amplexant behavior

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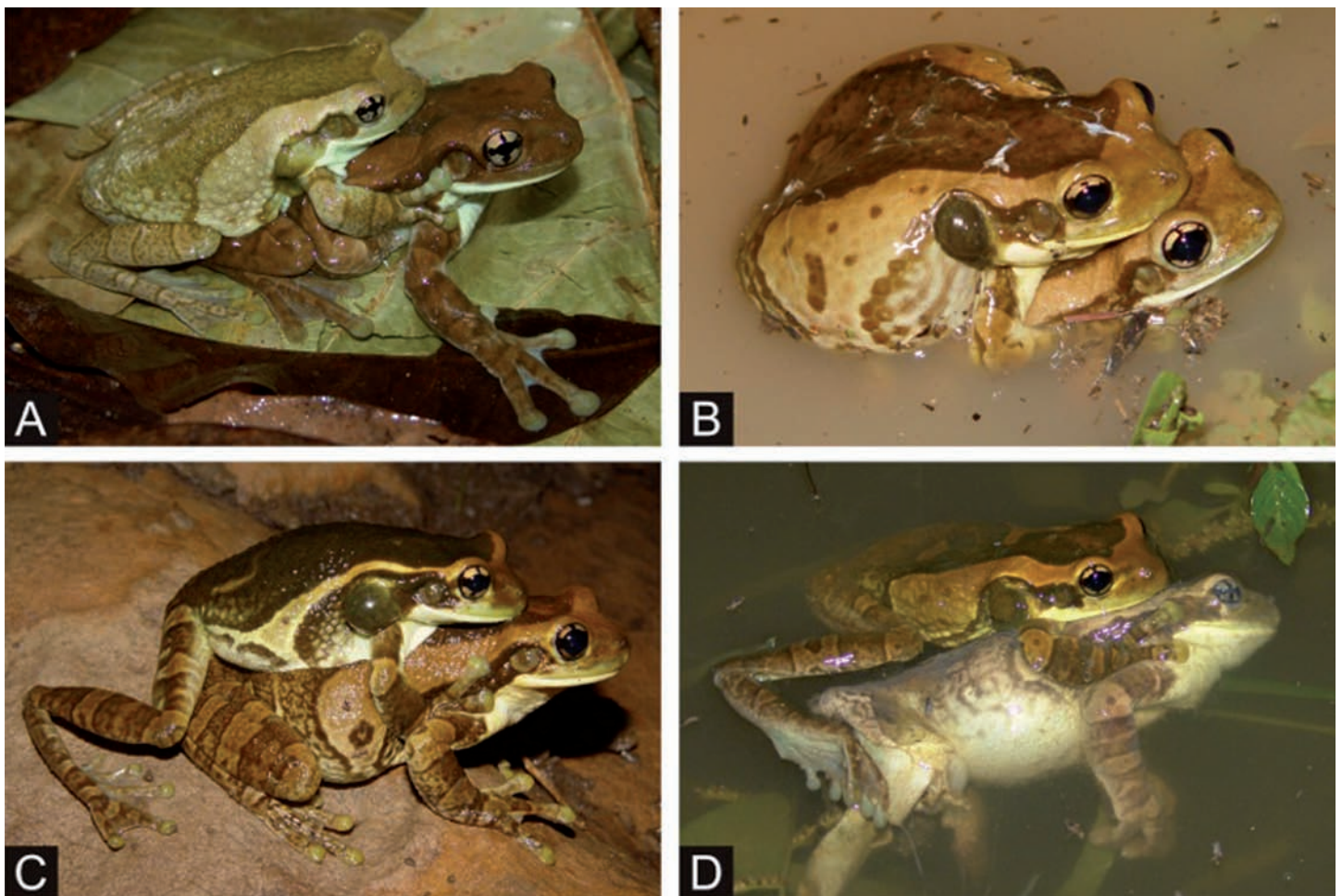
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As currently recognized the tribe Lophiohylini Miranda-Ribeiro, 1926 is composed of nine genera and 65 species (Frost, 2014). Among species of this tribe the Veined Treefrog *Trachycephalus typhonius* (Linnaeus, 1758) is widely distributed, occurring from southern Mexico to northern Argentina (La Marca *et al.*, 2010). The species is a typically explosive breeder, and it is common to observe many individuals aggregating at breeding sites after heavy rains (Prado *et al.*, 2005; Rodrigues *et al.*, 2005; Loebmann, 2013). Males and females can be found in lentic water bodies where they mate and lay eggs. Their

exotrophic tadpoles develop at the same site (Haddad and Prado, 2005; Prado *et al.*, 2005, Vieira *et al.*, 2009).

Necrophilia, also known as Davian behavior or necrogamy, has been reported frequently for anurans in the recent years, generally during explosive reproductive events, when one or more males drowns a female accidentally during mating (e.g., Bettaso *et al.*, 2008; Sinovas, 2009; Brito *et al.*, 2012; Izzo *et al.*, 2012).

The amplexus, i.e. the behavior of males embracing females during mating, varies considerably among species both morphologically and phylogenetically (see review in Duellman &



**Figure 1.** A-C) Three amplexed pairs of *Trachycephalus typhonius*. In all situations, note males in axillary amplexus with two fingers on the forelimbs. D) A male of *T. typhonius* amplexed with a dead female, characterizing a case of necrophilia. All observations were conducted at the municipality of Ubajara, state of Ceará, northeastern Brazil.

Trueb, 1994). Axillary amplexus is clearly the most common mating position in anurans (Haddad *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect variation of this behavior among distinct lineages. Herein, we report a case of necrophilia in *T. typhonius*, after an event of explosive reproduction in the Caatinga domain in Brazil. Additionally, we provide brief comments on axillary amplexus behavior.

On 22 January 2008 at 22:00 h, one of us (D. Loebmann) observed a multi-species explosive breeding event in a temporary pond in Ubajara, state of Ceará, northeastern Brazil (03°51'08.2"S; 40°56'16.7"W; 845 m above sea level; DATUM=WGS84). Besides *T. typhonius*, five other species were breeding simultaneously: *Leptodactylus macrosternum*, *Dendropsophus soaresi*, *Physalaemus cuvieri*, *Rhinella granulosa*, and *Dendropsophus minutus*.

Among mating individuals of *T. typhonius* it was possible to observe that all males used axillary amplexus. The individuals observed (n = 5) positioned only two fingers in the axillary region and the other two on the forelimbs (Figure 1A-C). Similar behavior was previously observed in other genera, such as *Litoria* (Hylidae), *Chiromantis* (Rhacophoridae), and *Pristimantis* (Craugastoridae) (Duellman and Trueb, 1994). Although no phylogenetic pattern is associated with this behavior, all cases correspond to taxa with expanded digital discs on the fingers, suggesting that this behavior may be related to this morphological constraint.

On the same night, a male *T. typhonius* was found amplexing a dead female (Figure 1D), characterizing a Davian behavior. The female was already presenting some degree of putrefaction, suggesting that its death occurred on the previous night.

To our knowledge, this is the first report of necrophilia for a species of Lophiohyliini. Necrophilia has been considered a behavioral mistake (Costa *et al.*, 2010). However, Davian behavior may be surprisingly functional in anurans (Izzo *et al.*, 2012), since most species have external fertilization. Unfortunately, we are unable to confirm that the male of *T. typhonius* that embraced the dead female had successfully fertilized her oocytes. This report contributes to the knowledge on the reproductive behavior of *T. typhonius*.

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*Micrurus surinamensis*, Porto Velho, RO. Foto: Diego Meneghelli.