REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Swimming Behavior of *Amphisbaena bassleri* (Squamata: Amphisbaenidae) from Bolivia

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Amphisbaenids or worm lizards are a predominantly fossorial and highly specialized group (Gans 2005; Maschio et al. 2009). Within the genus *Amphisbaena*, 102 species are currently recognized (Uetz et al. 2022); with 13 present in Bolivia. Due to physiological and morphological characters adapted for a fossorial lifestyle, the dispersal capacity of amphisbaenids has been considered limited (Hembree 2006; Albert et al. 2007; Maschio et al. 2009; Longrich et al. 2015). Several studies confirmed that amphisbaenids could overcome aquatic barriers (e.g., Señaris 1999; Torres-Ramírez et al. 2021), van der Hoek (2018) recorded swimming behavior in *A. bassleri* in Ecuador and Maschio et al. (2009) reported swimming behavior in *A. alba* and *A amazonica* in Brazil.

Amphisbaena bassleri is distributed throughout Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru (Gans 2005; Uetz et al. 2022). In Bolivia, this species has been recorded in the departments of Chuquisaca, Cochabamba, La Paz, and Santa Cruz (Uetz et al. 2022). Despite having a wide distribution, little is known

Figure 1. An *Amphisbaena bassleri* swimming in a pool of water at Sindicato Aroma, Municipality of Shinaota, Cochabamba, Bolivia. Photographs by Bladimir Marca.

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about the ecology or ethology of this species (Vanzolini 2002; van der Hoek and Jarrín 2017; van der Hoek 2018). Herein we document for the first time swimming behavior of *A. bassleri* in Bolivia.

At 1050 h on 6 January 2023, as part of a herpetological survey in Sindicato Aroma, Municipality of Shinaota, Cochabamba, Bolivia (17.126217 S, 65.181214 W), we observed an adult *A. bassleri* apparently foraging in a natural pool of water, in which trunks of *Ochroma pyramidale* (Balsa) and *Cecropia* sp. (Ambaibo) floated. The pool was approximately 5 x 3 m in size and 40 cm deep.

The individual swam with serpentine motion and kept its head and body level with the surface of the water, was very calm, and initially ignored our presence. Once it became aware of us, however, it left the pool and entered the adjacent secondary mature forest. We did not collect it, but documented the event with photographs (Fig. 1) and a short video (23 sec) available at https://youtube.com/shorts/UbfSNT-9xAY.

According to Maschio (2009), amphisbaenids swim only in extreme situations (e.g., escaping from predators). Our observation, however, suggests that amphisbaenids also might search for resources in aquatic situations.

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