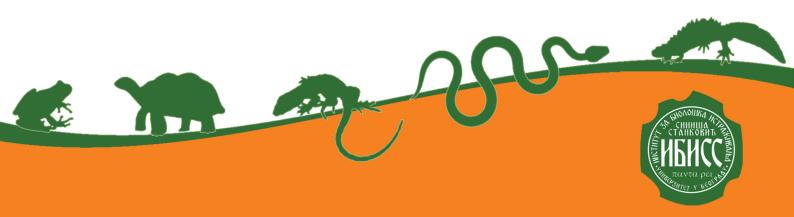


Program & Book of Abstracts Belgrade 2022



Institute for Biological Research "Siniša Stanković" National Institute of Republic of Serbia University of Belgrade, Serbia

PROGRAM & BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

21st European Congress of Herpetology



September 5th-9th, 2022 Belgrade

PUBLISHER

Institute for Biological Research "Siniša Stanković" – National Institute of Republic of Serbia, University of Belgrade, Serbia

FOR PUBLISHER

Mirjana Mihailović, director of the Institute for Biological Research "Siniša Stanković" – National Institute of Republic of Serbia, University of Belgrade

EDITORS Jelka Crnobrnja-Isailović Tanja Vukov Tijana Vučić Ljiljana Tomović

CONGRESS LOGO DESIGN Dejan Brajović

BOOK COVER Tanja Vukov, Marko Mirč

EDITION Available electronically only

PLACE AND YEAR OF PUBLICATION Belgrade, 2022

ISBN 978-86-80335-19-3

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Anatomy and morphology

Oral presentation

Vertebral regionalization vs. morphological integration in *Lissotriton* newts

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Serially homologous structures, such as the vertebral column, often undergo functional and evolutionary diversification and are a good model-system for studies of regionalization and morphological integration. We studied these topics in the vertebral column (atlas, trunk and sacral vertebrae) of the closely related taxa of small-bodied newts – Lissotriton schmidtleri, L. vulgaris ampelensis, L. v. meridionalis and L. v. vulgaris, using 3D geometric morphometrics on models that were acquired with micro-CT scanning. Two different statistical approaches were employed to test for vertebral regionalization and overall morphological integration, namely segmented linear regression (SLR) and a partial least squares method (PLS) We observed a common pattern of regionalization, with a transition point after the 5th trunk vertebra. It corresponds with the antero-posterior transition common for tetrapods. Morphological integration, accessed via PLS analysis, is strongest at the 6th and 7th trunk vertebrae, while the anterior and distal parts of the vertebral column are less integrated. The PLS analysis of the asymmetric component of shape variation revealed a weak integration, statistically significant only among subsequent trunk vertebrae. In summary, the vertebral column of the closely related *Lissotriton* newts is subtly regionalized, while being morphologically integrated overall. There is a complex relationship between regionalization and morphological integration of the vertebral column, most likely influenced by the newt's bi-phasic life cycle that instigates different functional constraints in the aquatic and terrestrial life stages.