IDENTIFYING HOSTS AND HOST'S ANSWERS TO THE ENIGMATIC AUTOCHTHONOUS LEECH _Haemopis elegans_ (HIRUDINEA: HAEMOPIDAE)

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For decades ectoparasitism on anurans was exclusively attributed to leeches of the genus Hirudo in Europe, whereas indigenous leeches of the genus Haemopis were considered to show a preclusive macrophagous feeding behaviour. Nevertheless, the family Hirudinidae is poly-paraphylic, and the feeding behaviour is no synapomorphic attribute within this leech family.

In 2004 the Haemopid taxon _Haemopis elegans_ (Moquin-Tandon, 1846) was renovated, perhaps re-erected as species, and plausibly separated from the ubiquitous and abundant predacious species _H. sanguisuga_ after a century of being vanished. The feeding behaviour and the prevalence of this Central European autochthonous leech are unknown so far.

During an amphibian population monitoring at the Lanzendorfer Moor near Klagenfurt in Carinthia in spring 2005 some common toads (_Bubo bufo_) were detected being molested and injured by leeches. The leeches stuck on the toads unequivocally, penetrated the toad's skin marginally via a bite, causing a massive skin reddening and irritation; and a picayune after-bleeding circle became apparent when the leeches were removed by force. The leeches were surprisingly diagnosed as members of the Haemopid taxon _Haemopis elegans_.

Due to a weaker shaped mouthpart compared to the one of the predacious _H. sanguisuga_, tissue- or blood-feeding of _H. elegans_ was assumed formerly; the original author, Moquin-Tandon, even postulated sanguivory on homiothermal vertebrates. Thus, attacking and assaulting toads seems to be a possible behavior of this leech taxon - at least as a failed attempt of tissue feeding on an oversized prey. A distinctive, common anti-leech behavior of water frogs was described at the Lanzendorfer Moor previously. Whether this is an analogue behavior of frogs to the well known anti-violator behaviour of common toads, or this is the local frogs answer to assaults by _H. elegans_, remains open.