

AMBYSTOMA OPACUM (Marbled Salamander). **COLORATION.** At 1100 h on 7 November 2007, I found one adult male *A. opacum* (57 mm snout-vent length) that lacked the normal color pattern for this species (Fig. 1). Adults typically have white or gray saddles that run the full length of the dorsal surface. Some specimens may lack crossbands and have two longitudinal stripes (Trauth and Richards 1988. Bull. Chicago Herpetol. Soc. 23:87); however, this specimen had no saddles on the dorsal surface of the body. It did, however, have numerous small flecks of gray color across the dorsum and extremely faint, nearly imperceptible saddles on the tail. I discovered this specimen in Big Cypress Tree State Park, Weakly County, Tennessee (36.199260 °N, 88.890351 °W; WGS84) and photographed and released it at the site of capture.

Several color variants have been reported for marbled salamanders. Albinism is the most widely documented. It has been noted to occur in larvae in Rhode Island, Connecticut, Maryland, Mississippi (Deegan et al. 1998. Herpetol. Rev. 29:229), and Illinois (Walston and Register 2004. Herpetol. Rev. 35: 365) and in adults from Tennessee (Campbell 2011. Herpetol. Rev. 42: 80-81) and Illinois (Walston and Register *op. cit.*). There are also reports of a hypomelanistic adult from Tennessee (Simpson and Wilson 2010. Herpetol. Rev. 41: 185-186) and leucistic larvae from Virginia (Mitchell and Church 2002. Banisteria 20:67-69). Two reports document hypermelanism (i.e. “melanoid mutants” per Richards and Nace 1983. Copeia 1983: 979-990). Connior

(2013. Herpetol. Rev. 44: 114) discovered a variant in Arkansas that was characterized by a significant reduction, but not absence, of the white saddles; however, Simpson & Wilson (*op. cit.*) reported the first known specimens of a completely melanoid *A. opacum*. These were collected at the Volunteer Army Ammunition Plant in Hamilton Co., Tennessee. They found one adult male and two females. The male was completely black and lacked any trace of the white saddles; however, both females expressed the normal pattern, but the back pattern was faint and nearly undetectable. The specimen I discovered appears to be a variant like those reported by Simpson and Wilson (*op. cit.*); however, they did not report the presence of small flecks of gray on the dorsal surface. No photograph was published in their report for comparison.

To my knowledge, this is only the third report of a color variant for *A. opacum* in Tennessee and the first report of such an occurrence in West, Tennessee. Thus, color variants have now been reported in East (Hamilton Co.; melanoid – Simpson and Wilson 2010, *op. cit.*), Middle (Franklin Co.; albinism – Campbell 2011, *op. cit.*), and West (Weakley Co.; melanoid - this report) Tennessee. The presence of melanoid specimens in both East and West Tennessee indicates that such variants may exist at low frequencies across the full extent of this species’ range within the state.

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FIG. 1. A melanoid adult marbled salamander (*Ambystoma opacum*) discovered on 7 November 2007 at Big Cypress Tree State Park, Weakley County, Tennessee. Photograph by Joshua M Hall.