

A second record of *Acanthochelys pallidipectoris* (Freiberg, 1945) in the Humid Chaco of Paraguay

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Locality.— Paraguay, Central, Villa Elisa (Fig. 1). Exact coordinates can be provided upon request to the corresponding author. In March 6th 2025, a male of the species (Fig. 2) was found in a house garden. **Comments.**— The site where the turtle was found is highly urbanized, at least 1.8 km away from the Paraguay river on a straight-line measurement, around 150 and 170 km respectively from the nearest localities (El Bagual Natural Reserve, Formosa, Argentina: Scrocchi and Giraudo, 2005; and Pilar, Ñeembucu department, Paraguay: Giraudo and Contreras, 1994). The site of the find has a perimeter fence that is not fixed to the ground. The specimen was collected by local residents and later transferred to the Departamento de Recursos Faunísticos y Medio Natural (Facultad de Ciencias Veterinarias, Universidad Nacional de Asunción), where we made routine medical assessments following all the required permits issued by the Ministerio del Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible. The specimen is currently kept in captivity at the Facultad de Ciencias Veterinarias, under the care of veterinary staff.

The specimen weighed 458 g with straight carapace length of 164 mm, maximum carapace width 120 mm, plastron length 147 mm, plastron width 96 mm, and carapace height 50 mm. These measurements closely match those reported by Vinke *et al.* (2011) and Cassano (2022), also suggesting the specimen is an adult. The single physical damage we perceived was a chronic injury on the left eyeball.

Regarding weather conditions, the days lead-

ing up to March 6th, 2025, Villa Elisa experienced the lingering humidity and warmth characteristic of late summer in Paraguay's Central Department. The beginning of the month showed partly cloudy skies with occasional bursts of sunshine, and the air remained heavy with moisture. On March 3rd and 4th, brief showers were recorded in the afternoon, accompanied by mild easterly winds that stirred the dense clouds. By March 5th, cloud cover had thickened slightly, leading to a warm, overcast morning and light rainfall during the evening hours. On March 6th, the weather was notably humid and warm, with early morning temperatures hovering around 23°C and reaching up to 31°C by mid-afternoon. The sky remained mostly cloudy throughout the day, although no major rainfall was recorded. A light breeze from the southeast moved slowly across the urban landscape.

Villa Elisa is part of the Metropolitan Area of Asunción, a region where urban growth has outpaced planning efforts, resulting in flood-prone neighborhoods, and increasing pressure on natural ecosystems. The landscape is gently undulating, sloping toward the Paraguay River. While many roads in the city center are paved, a significant portion of Villa Elisa still features cobblestone streets. In the surrounding areas, dirt roads predominate, interspersed with green spaces that include industrial lots, sports fields, vacant land, and waste disposal sites. *Acanthochelys pallidipectoris* inhabits a wide range of water bodies from ditches along roads and

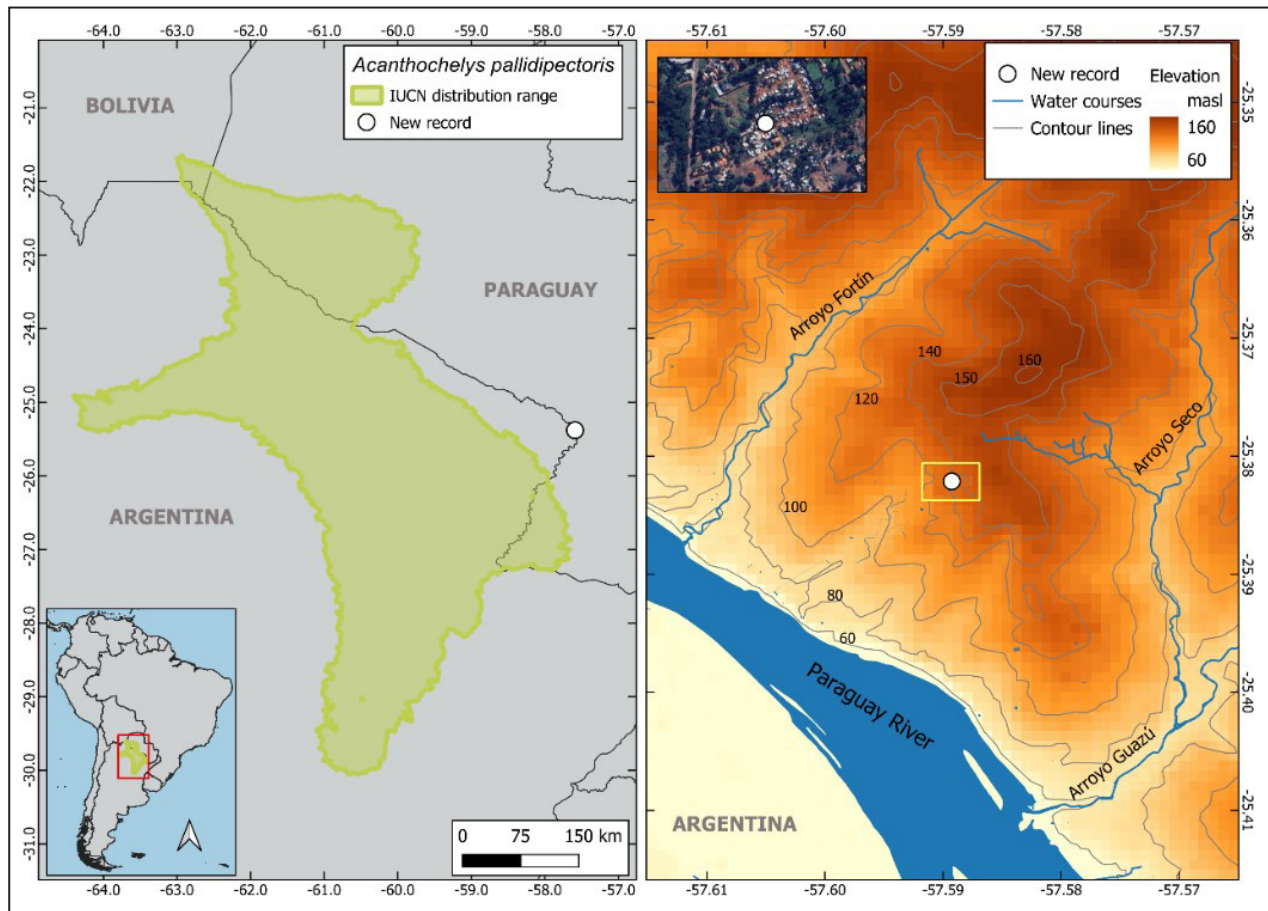


Figure 1. Distribution map of *A. pallidipectoris* (left), and the location of the new record (right). White dot indicates the new record in Villa Elisa (Central Department, Paraguay).

artificial ponds and flooding grasslands, usually in shallow waters (Cabrera, 2022). No ditches were found that could facilitate the animals access from the river to the site of the find, and the only water bodies in the surroundings of the area where this new record was found are some deeply urbanized streams, referred in Figure 1.

In this area the only freshwater turtle recorded was *Mesoclemmys vanderhaegei* (Cacciali and Buonghermini, 2022). Reports of *A. pallidipectoris* in Paraguay are comparatively scarce and associated to the western portion of the Chaco (Fritz and Pauler, 1992; Cacciali *et al.*, 2016; Sanchez *et al.* 2019; Villalba *et al.*, 2022) but with a single record for natural areas near Pilar (Ñeembucu department: Giraudo and Contreras, 1994). *Acanthochelys pallidipectoris* is a species categorized as Endangered according to the IUCN Red List (Vinke and Vinke, 2022), although at national level its status varies between the different countries. Being categorized from as Critically Endangered (in Paraguay: Martínez *et al.*, 2020)

and Threatened in Argentina (Prado *et al.*, 2012). In Bolivia, the last categorization classified it as Nearly Threatened (González and Montaña, 2009), although newer studies identify it as a high priority species, based on the analysis of conservation priorities (Domic-Rivadeneira *et al.*, 2021).

This record represents a range extension for *A. pallidipectoris*, highlighting the importance of urban biodiversity monitoring in areas traditionally considered outside the species' range. Although the presence of the individual in such an atypical environment may suggest anthropogenic introduction, either accidental or intentional, it also underlines the need to investigate overlooked or novel dispersal mechanisms. Data reported by Vetter and Clay (2024) show a clear preference toward tortoises (*Chelonoidis carbonaria* and *C. chilensis*) for the illegal pet trade in Paraguay with freshwater turtles in a much smaller scale. Given the species' threatened conservation status and the increasing transformation of its natural habitat, further efforts



Figure 2. Dorsal (A), ventral (B) and frontal (C) views of the male of *A. pallidipectoris*.

are warranted to assess potential movements, both natural and human-mediated, and to evaluate the role of urban environments in shaping species distribution patterns. This finding reinforces the value of continued surveillance and citizen engagement in biodiversity reporting, particularly in densely populated and rapidly changing regions such as the Metropolitan Area of Asunción.

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