



***Zilchogyra franzi* Weyrauch, 1965 (Gastropoda: Charopidae), a minute landsnail rediscovered in Sierra de la Ventana (Southern Pampas, Argentina)**

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Zilchogyra franzi was described on the basis of a single specimen (holotype in Fundación Miguel Lillo: FML 1217, Fig. 1) from the Ventania mountain system (Weyrauch 1965b) and this was so far the only publication on this species. Weyrauch (1965b) described the shell and gave a brief account of the habitat, based on the information provided by the collector Dr. Herbert Franz. Franz had found *Z. franzi* in a ravine in Sierra de la Ventana, in a humid hollow in the rock, lined with dark soil with ferns and “bromeliads” (probably *Eryngium* spp., Apiaceae).

The mountain system of Ventania (highest altitude: 1200 m a.s.l.) lies in Argentina’s southern Pampas (from 37°39’ to 38°17’S, 62°W). The climate is temperate, with a mean annual temperature of 14°C. Annual rainfall is around 800 mm (Paoloni *et al.* 1988), spring being the wet season. Vegetation physiognomy corresponds to pampas grasslands, but the diversity of ecological conditions allows floral components belonging to different biogeographical regions to flourish (Frangi and Bottino 1995).

Extensive searching between 2002 and 2006 over a wide range of microhabitats located live and dead specimens of *Z. franzi* in two ravines and on two slopes in mountains within the “Ernesto Tornquist” Provincial Park in Sierra de la Ventana (Fig. 2). We obtained the following material: **Ravine 1**: 4 living snails, leg. VKD and CHF Pérez, 10 April 2003; 2 shells, leg. VKD, 24 August 2003; 7 living snails and 17 shells, leg. VKD, JP and SB, 2 May 2006. **Ravine 2**: 2 living snails and 1 shell, leg. VKD and CHF Pérez, 3 November 2003. **Slope 1**: 1 shell, leg. VKD, 25 April 2003. **Slope 2**: 6 shells, leg. VKD, 25 April 2003. Material was deposited in Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales “Bernardino Rivadavia,” Buenos Aires (MACN-In 37712, two specimens), Museo de La Plata, La Plata (MLP 13114, two specimens) and Fundación Miguel Lillo (FML 15342, two specimens).

Ravine 1 (530–580 m a.s.l., 32–40° inclination) (Fig. 3) and ravine 2 (780 m a.s.l., 36° inclination) are characterised by steep slopes cut by massive rock walls forming crags of 8–10 m height with hollows and caves at their base. Snails were found in organic soils of shady hollows with hygrophilous and shade-loving vegetation such as mosses and ferns. In slope 1 and slope 2, which also have high rock walls, we only found old, damaged shells, downhill from crags, probably carried downslope by drainage water. *Zilchogyra franzi* seems to be a rare species since after intensive searches it was found on only a few occasions and in low numbers. It is probably a habitat-specialist species, restricted to humid microhabitats.

Zilchogyra franzi was found in the company of the exotic Punctidae *Paralaoma servilis* (Shuttleworth, 1852). In contrast with *Z. franzi*, *P. servilis* is common in Sierra de la Ventana; we found it in the soil, in litter, under rocks and under the bark of *Eucalyptus* trees. *Paralaoma servilis* has been described several times under different names in Argentina and different parts of the world (Hausdorf 2002). There is an early record of *Radiodiscus pilsbryi* Hylton-Scott, 1957 (a junior synonym of *P. servilis*) for Sierra de la Ventana (Fernández 1973).

Using the method of Solem (1976) (Figs. 4–6), we measured 32 shells, ranging from 2.2 to 5.4 mm in major diameter. Below we provide a redescription of *Z. franzi* that is based on adult specimens, documents conchological variability and provides novel information on shell microsculpture derived from SEM micrographs (SEM Evo 40 Leo 2003).

Family Charopidae Hutton, 1884

Genus *Zilchogyra* Weyrauch, 1965a

Type species: *Helix costellata* d’Orbigny, 1835, by original designation

***Zilchogyra franzi* Weyrauch, 1965b**

Type locality: Sierra de la Ventana, Buenos Aires province, by original designation (Weyrauch, 1965b).