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EVOLUTIONARY GENETICS OF TETRODOTOXIN (TTX) RESISTANCE IN

SNAKES: TRACKING A FEEDING ADAPTATION FROM

POPULATIONS THROUGH CLADES

by

Chris R. Feldman

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Biology

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2008

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ABSTRACT

Evolutionary Genetics of Tetrodotoxin (TTX) Resistance in Snakes:

Tracking a Feeding Adaptation from

Populations Through Clades

by

Chris R. Feldman, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2008

Major Professor: Dr. Michael E. Pfrender Department: Biology

Understanding the nature of adaptive evolution has been the recent focus of research detailing the genetic basis of adaptation and theoretical work describing the mechanics of adaptive evolution. Nevertheless, key questions regarding the process of adaptive evolution remain. Ultimately, a detailed description of the ecological context, evolutionary history, and genetic basis of adaptations is required to advance our understanding of adaptive evolution. To address some of the contemporary issues surrounding adaptive evolution, I examine phenotypic and genotypic changes in a snake feeding adaptation.

Adaptations can arise through fixation of novel mutations or recruitment of existing variation. Some populations of the garter snakes *Thamnophis sirtalis*, *T. couchii*, and *T. atratus* possess elevated resistance to tetrodotoxin (TTX), the lethal toxin of their

newt prey. I show that TTX resistance has evolved independently through amino acid changes at critical sites in a voltage-gated sodium channel protein $(Na_v1.4)$ targeted by TTX. Thus, adaptive evolution has occurred multiple times in garter snakes via *de novo* acquisition of beneficial mutations.

Detailing the genetic basis of adaptive variation in natural populations is the first step towards understanding the tempo and mode of adaptive evolution. I evaluate the contribution of $Na_v1.4$ alleles to TTX resistance in two garter snake species from central coastal California. Allelic variation in $Na_v1.4$ explains 29% and 98% of the variation in TTX resistance in *T. atratus* and *T. sirtalis*, respectively, demonstrating that $Na_v1.4$ is a major effect locus. The simple genetic architecture of TTX resistance in garter snakes may significantly impact the dynamics of trait change and coevolution.

Patterns of convergent evolution are cited as some of the most compelling examples of the strength of natural selection in shaping organismal diversity. Yet repeated patterns may tell us as much about the constraints that restrict evolution as about the importance of natural selection. I present data on convergent molecular adaptations in parallel arms-races between diverse snakes and amphibians from across the globe. Six snake species that prey on TTX bearing amphibians have independently acquired amino acid changes in $Na_v1.4$. The derived mutations are clustered in two portions of the gene, often involving the same sites and substitutions. While a number of amino acid changes can make $Na_v1.4$ insensitive to TTX, most of these negatively impact or abolish the ionconducting function of the protein. Thus, intramolecular pleiotropy likely prevents most replacements from becoming fixed and imposes limits on protein evolution.

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cherish my experiences working with them and strive to become a mentor in their mold. Lastly, Mike Thomas, Alissa Salmore, Jim Parham, Scott Scheff, Jason Izakowitz, John and Marina Durrant, my parents Robert and Kathy, my sister Joy, my parents-in-law Jeanine and Jean Matocq, my wife Marjorie Matocq and our son Rowan, all merit special attention for their unending support, the inspiration their successes provide, and the delight their friendships give.

Chris R. Feldman

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Genetic studies combined with the analysis of phenotypic variation are fundamental to our understanding of the process of adaptive evolution (Futuyma, 1998). Recently, the study of adaptive variation has benefited from theoretical developments (e.g., Orr, 2005a, 2005b; Phillips, 2005) as well as major gains in molecular genetic techniques, and growing number of studies are beginning to document the molecular basis of adaptation (e.g., Wichman et al., 1999; Rokyta et al., 2005; Gompel et al., 2005; Joron et al., 2006). Nevertheless, a number of unresolved issues regarding the generality of the mechanisms of adaptive evolution remain (Barton, 2001; Carroll, 2005; Hoekstra and Coyne, 2007; Barrett and Schluter, 2008; Pennisi, 2008). Further development of the field will come from empirical data that explicitly address the outstanding questions that surround adaptive evolution (Feder and Mitchell-Olds, 2003; Ellegren and Sheldon, 2008; Stinchcombe and Hoekstra, 2008). Progress will be made by studies that describe the genetic basis of adaptation and analyze the process of adaptive evolution in natural settings (e.g., Hoekstra et al., 2006; Storz et al., 2007). Yet genetic characterization of ecologically relevant traits in wild populations is rare, typically because the selective agents generally remain vague, the characters under selection often difficult to define, and the molecular basis of the traits thought to be under selection usually unknown. Thus, an impediment to our progress is the availability of empirical systems with welldefined ecological contexts and selection pressures, and with a clearly defined genetic basis for adaptation.

The interaction between toxic Pacific newts (*Taricha*) and the resistant predatory garter snakes (*Thamnophis*) provides a model system for the study of adaptation variation and predator-prey coevolution (Brodie and Brodie, 1999). This system is ideal because the traits that mediate the coevolution are easily decomposed (Brodie and Ridenhour, 2003), geographically variable (Brodie et al., 2002; Hanifin et al., 2008), and in the predator, at least, seemingly under control by a well-studied gene family (Geffeney et al., 2002, 2005). Furthermore, arm-race dynamics between populations of newts and garter snakes appears to have evolved multiple times independently (Brodie et al., 2005). I exploit these features of the newt-snake system to address three issues that surround the study of adaptive evolution: 1) the source of adaptations; 2) the genetic architecture of adaptations; 3) the constraints on adaptations.

Populations can adapt to novel environments in two ways: selection on new mutations or selection on pre-existing variation (Orr and Betancourt, 2001). The dynamics of natural selection can differ dramatically when adaptations result from either novel mutations or changes in the frequency of standing genetic variation, influencing the rate and fate of adaptive evolution (Orr and Betancourt, 2001; Hermisson and Pennings, 2005; Barrett and Schluter, 2008). New mutations start at extremely low frequencies and are prone to loss through genetic drift (Nei et al., 1975; Allendorf, 1986). However, natural selection will promote highly advantageous alleles more quickly than alleles with smaller effects (Falconer and Mackay, 1996). Thus large effect alleles will be more likely to escape drift, and so we expect that adaptive evolution through new mutations involves alleles with major fitness advantages (Orr and Betancourt, 2001; Hermisson and Pennings, 2005; Barrett and Schluter, 2008). Regardless, the fixation of new adaptive

variation will occur slowly because the initial frequencies of new mutations are close to zero (Barrett and Schluter, 2008). However, if a beneficial allele is present in standing variation, then adaptive evolution can proceed rapidly, not only because beneficial alleles are immediately available but also because they start at higher frequencies than new mutations (Barrett and Schluter, 2008). This also means that small effect alleles have a higher chance of contributing to adaptations because they have already escaped drift and can more easily rise to fixation (Orr and Betancourt, 2001; Hermisson and Pennings, 2005; Barrett and Schluter, 2008). Thus, assessing the relative contribution of new versus old variation is important in understanding how adaptive evolution proceeds in natural settings (Barrett and Schluter, 2008). To this end, I examine whether parallel feeding adaptations in three species of *Thamnophis* are the result of independent mutational events or the recruitment of the same standing variation (Chapter 2).

The underlying genetic architecture of adaptations affects not only the tempo and mode of phenotypic evolution, but also patterns of coevolution. Coevolutionary cycles are predicted to be more stable and dynamic under a multilocus model because adaptive alleles in the predator rarely change in harmony, allowing the prey to stay "ahead" in the arms-race (Sasaki, 2000; Agrawal and Lively, 2002, 2003; Kopp and Gavrilets, 2006; Nuismer et al., 2007). Conversely, when the traits that mediate the coevolution have a simple genetic basis, selection can more easily fix all the adaptive alleles, leading to the evolution of extreme phenotypes in which the prey "loses" the arm-race (Sasaki, 2000; Kopp and Gavrilets, 2006; Nuismer et al., 2007). Thus, detailing the genetic architecture of adaptations is essential in understanding coevolutionary dynamics (Bohannan and Lenski, 2000; Thompson, 2005; Wade, 2007; e.g., Yoshida et al., 2007). I assess the

contribution of genetic variation to toxin resistance in two garter snake species, and how this bears on the tempo and stability of newt-snake coevolution (Chapter 3).

A long-standing debate in evolutionary biology is the relative role of evolutionary constraints in restricting the course and pattern of adaptive evolution (Gould and Lewontin, 1979; Maynard Smith et al., 1985; Wake, 1991; Arnold, 1992; Futuyma, 1998; Pigliucci and Kaplan, 2000; Brakefield and Roskam, 2006; Brakefield, 2007). Can natural selection always fit organisms optimally to their environments, or do physical, historical, and genetic factors often bias the amount and pattern of variation upon which natural selection can act? Experimental manipulations have shown that heritable variation is rarely lacking, and given the right demographic conditions and enough time, natural selection can push populations over perceived hurdles (Travisano et al., 1995; Teotónio and Rose, 2000; Beldade et al., 2002; Frankino et al., 2005, 2007). There are ample reasons, however, to assume that biochemical and structural limitations at lower levels of organization have cascading effects on how organisms can become suited to their environments (Maynard Smith et al., 1985; Wake, 1991; Futuyma, 1998; Pigliucci and Kaplan, 2000; DePristo et al., 2005; e.g., Miller et al., 2006; Weinreich et al., 2006). Furthermore, historical contingencies and bias in how variation is generated may also limit selective responses (Gould 1989a; Arnold, 1992; Futuyma, 1998; Brakefield and Roskam, 2006; Brakefield, 2007). Taking a broad phylogenetic view of amphibian-snake coevolution, I assess the role of constraints by estimating bias in the molecular convergence evident across snake lineages (Chapter 4). I then relate the narrow genetic response of snakes back to possible biophysical tradeoffs that likely serves as an evolutionary constraint.

The coevolution between resistant snakes and their toxic amphibian prey is well poised for addressing some of the most fundamental and fascinating issues surrounding ecology and evolution (Brodie and Brodie, 1999). In collaboration with my mentors (see Acknowledgments), I look forward to making continual strides in our understanding of the natural history, ecology, and evolution of this chemically mediated system. It is my hope that the reader finds this research as compelling as I have—from the questions being posed, to the data collected, to the organisms themselves.

CHAPTER 2

PARALLEL ARMS RACES AND CONVERGENT MOLECULAR EVOLUTION: GARTER SNAKES (THAMNOPHIS) REPEATEDLY ADAPT TO DEADLY PREY

INTRODUCTION

Since the early days of the modern synthesis, genetic studies combined with the analysis of phenotypic variation have been fundamental to our understanding of the process of adaptive evolution (Futuyma, 1998). In recent years the study of adaptive variation has benefited from major gains in molecular genetic techniques and a growing number of studies documenting the molecular basis of adaptation (e.g., Nachman et al., 2003; Abzhanov et al., 2004; Alberston et al., 2005; Rokyta et al., 2005; Storz et al., 2007). The result of these studies is a rapid increase in our understanding of the process of, and constraints to adaptive evolution. Among the unresolved issues are a number of important questions regarding the generality of the mechanisms underlying the process of adaptive evolution. For example, is adaptive evolution typically the result of novel mutations, or changes in the frequency of standing genetic variation in natural populations (Orr and Betancourt, 2001; Hermisson and Pennings, 2005; Barrett and Schluter, 2008)? Do gene flow among populations and hybridization among species facilitate or retard adaptive evolution, and under what circumstances (Arnold, 1997; Barton, 2001; Seehausen, 2004)? What are the relative contributions of changes in gene regulation and gene function (Carroll, 2005; Hoekstra and Coyne, 2007; Wray, 2007; Pennisi, 2008)? While the theoretical framework describing the process of adaptive evolution is rapidly advancing (Orr, 2005a, 2005b; Phillips, 2005), further development

is dependent on empirical data to explicitly address these questions. Major advances will be achieved through studies that describe the genetic basis of adaptation and analyze the process of adaptive evolution in structured populations. One ideal setting is empirical systems with a repeated pattern of convergent evolution in phylogenetically independent species with geographically structured populations experiencing common selective pressures.

I exploit such a system in the coevolutionary relationship between garter snake predators (*Thamnophis*) and their toxic newt prey (*Taricha*). Newts of the genus *Taricha* possess the neurotoxin tetrodotoxin (TTX) (Mosher et al., 1964; Wakely et al., 1966; Brodie et al., 1974; Yotsu et al., 1990), which acts as a powerful chemical defense against vertebrate predators (Brodie, 1968; Brodie et al., 1974). Tetrodotoxin binds to voltagegated sodium channels in nerves and muscles, blocking the movement of sodium ions $(Na⁺)$ across the cell membrane and halting the propagation of action potentials that control nerve impulses (Kao and Levinson, 1986; Hille, 2001). By paralyzing nerves and excitable muscle cells, TTX causes immobilization, respiratory failure, and often, death (Brodie, 1968; How et al., 2003; Isbister and Kiernan, 2005). Despite the fact that TTX is one of the most potent neurotoxins known (Medinsky and Klaassen, 1996), *T. sirtalis* in a number of populations are able to prey on toxic *T. granulosa* (Brodie and Brodie, 1990, 1991). The levels of TTX resistance in garter snakes and concentrations of TTX in newts often covary over much of western North America, suggesting the two species have entered coevolutionary arms-races characterized by adaptation and counteradaptation (Brodie et al., 2002; Hanifin et al., 2008). While the means of TTX production in newts remains unknown (Hanifin et al., 2002, 2003; Tsuruda et al., 2002;

Cardall et al., 2004; Lehman et al., 2004), the physiological and genetic mechanisms at least partially responsible for elevated TTX resistance in *T. sirtalis* have been recently uncovered (Geffeney et al., 2002, 2005). A few amino acid changes in the skeletal muscle sodium channel ($Na_v1.4$) alter the molecular environment of the channel pore and dramatically alter TTX binding affinity to this protein (Geffeney et al., 2005).

A parallel ecological interaction between garter snake and newt was recently described in the Sierra Nevada of California: *T*. *couchii* prey on both *T*. *torosa* (Brodie et al., 2005) and *T. sierrae* (Wiseman and Pool, 2007) and are resistant to TTX at levels seen in sympatric *T*. *torosa* (Brodie et al., 2005). Here I document a third arms race involving an additional garter snake and newt interaction: *T*. *atratus* sympatric with TTX bearing *Taricha* are resistant to TTX. The repeated occurrence of TTX resistance in multiple *Thamnophis* species provides a context to examine alternative hypotheses for convergent adaptations. Are convergent adaptations among multiple *Thamnophis* species the result of (i) independent evolution via new mutation, (ii) the recruitment of standing variation, or (iii) the transfer of beneficial alleles via gene flow? Resistance to TTX appears in both closely and distantly related garter snake taxa, given the significant difference in coalescence times for nuclear and mitochondrial genes (Moore, 1995; Palumbi et al., 2001) we cannot *a priori* rule out incomplete lineage sorting. Furthermore, there is evidence of infrequent hybridization between garter snake species, even across diverse *Thamnophis* clades (Rossman et al., 1996; Shine et al., 2004). For alleles with a substantial fitness advantage, even low levels of introgression may be sufficient to allow the transfer of adaptive variation among species (Arnold, 1997; Barton, 2001). To reconstruct the evolutionary sequence of elevated TTX resistance in

Thamnophis, I first examine genetic underpinnings of resistance across garter snakes, and then use gene trees to distinguish the signature of (i) independent molecular evolution from that of (ii) incomplete lineage sorting or horizontal transfer.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Bioassays

I collected TTX resistance data from 22 *T*. *atratus*, 84 *T. couchii* and 85 *T. sirtalis* from California (Fig. 2.1; Table 2.1; Appendix A). To provide a phylogenetic perspective on the evolution of elevated TTX resistance, I also collected resistance data from 240 garter snakes from 8 species representing the major *Thamnophis* clades (de Queiroz et al., 2002) and from 34 snakes from 4 outgroup taxa representing pertinent New World natricine lineages (Alfaro and Arnold, 2001) (Table 2.1). Some TTX resistance data came from Motychak et al. (1999) and Brodie et al. (2005).

I measured TTX resistance using a bioassay of whole organism performance (Brodie and Brodie, 1990; Brodie et al., 2002). I first established an individual's "baseline speed" by racing it down a 4m racetrack equipped with infrared sensors. I averaged the speed of two time trials to obtain an individual's baseline crawl speed. Following a day of rest, I gave each snake an intra-peritoneal injection of a known, massadjusted dose of TTX (Sigma). Thirty minutes post-injection I raced snakes on the track to determine "post-injection speed." I repeated this process, resting snakes for a day then increasing the dose of TTX (0.5 μ g, 1 μ g, 2 μ g, 5 μ g and 10 μ g) and running snakes, up to five total sequential TTX tests per snake. I scored "resistance" as the reduction of an individual's baseline sprint speed following an injection of TTX (post-injection

speed/baseline speed). I calculated a population (or species) dose response curve from individual responses to the serial TTX injections using a simple linear regression (Ridenhour et al., 2004). From this regression model I estimated the "50% dose," defined as the amount of TTX required to reduce the average snake to 50% of its baseline speed. This measure is analogous to a 50% inhibition concentration (IC_{50}) . Because TTX resistance is related to body size (Brodie and Brodie, 1990; Ridenhour et al., 2004), I transformed doses into mass-adjusted mouse units (MAMU), the amount of TTX (mg) required to kill a 20g mouse in 10 minutes (see Ridenhour et al., 2004). This correction allows direct comparison of TTX resistance between individuals, populations, or species. Further details of the bioassay and information on captive care of snakes can be found elsewhere (Brodie et al., 2002; Ridenhour et al., 2004).

Sequence Data

I collected sequence data from $Na_v1.4$ from a subset of garter snakes and outgroup taxa assayed for TTX resistance (Table 2.1). The single α -subunit of Na_v loci forms a membrane-spanning channel that allows selective permeation of $Na⁺$ ions (Hille, 2001). This subunit consists of four domains (DI-DIV) each containing six transmembrane helices (S1-S6) with the polypeptide chains linking S5 and S6 creating the outer pore of the channel (Fig. 2.2) (Hille, 2001). The four pore forming segments (P-loops) fold back into the membrane to create the outer pore, modeled as a cone at the base of which lies a narrow selectivity filter (Lipkind and Fozzard, 2000; Hille, 2001) that preferentially allows $Na⁺$ ions to pass through the channel (the DEKA motif; Terlau et al., 1991; Heinemann et al., 1992). The funnel shape of the outer pore is thought to form from four

α-helix-turn-β-strand structures (one from each S5-S6 linker), with the last residue of each turn facing the pore to create the selectivity filter (Lipkind and Fozzard, 2000). These same structures that line the outer pore and permit selectivity and permeability of Na⁺ through the channel bind strongly to TTX. TTX apparently fits into the vestibule through a combination of hydrogen and ionic bonds, steric attraction, and cation- π interaction (Terlau et al., 1991; Kontis and Goldin, 1993; Penzotti et al., 1998; Yamagishi et al., 2001; Choudhary et al., 2003; Tikhonov and Zhorov, 2005; Scheib et al., 2006; Santarelli et al., 2007), essentially docking in the outer pore and blocking $Na⁺$ movement (Hille, 2001). Thus, I focused my investigation on amino acid variation in the four Ploops of Na_v1.4, paying attention to the α -helix-turn-β-strand structures. I obtained the entire coding sequence (CDS) of $Na_v1.4$ from seven garter snakes (four species) to check for post-transcriptal modification (Liu et al., 2004; Song et al., 2004).

I isolated and purified genomic DNA from muscle or liver tissue with the DNeasy Tissue Kit (Qiagen, Inc.). I amplified (Saiki et al., 1988) the four regions of $Na_v1.4$ between the S5 and S6 transmembrane segments that form the P-loop using primers I designed specifically for snake $Na_v1.4$ (Appendix B). My amplicons included a linked intron in DI and portions of two introns in DIII (Appendix C). I cleaned amplified products using the ExcelaPure PCR Purification Kit (Edge Biosystems) and used purified template in cycle-sequencing reactions with Big Dye 3.1 (Applied Biosystems, Inc.). Following an isopropanol/ethanol precipitation, I ran cycle-sequenced products on an ABI 3130 automated sequencer (Applied Biosystems, Inc.). I sequenced all samples in both directions.

I isolated and purified mRNA from fresh skeletal muscle with the RNeasy Mini Plus Kit (Qiagen, Inc.). I reverse transcribed total mRNA to cDNA with the iScript Select cDNA Synthesis Kit (BioRad) and oligo(dT) primer. I then amplified a series of overlapping pieces of $Na_v1.4$ to construct a complete contig of the locus using primers I designed specifically for snake $Na_v1.4$ (Appendix A). I cleaned and sequenced amplified products as above. I edited sequences by eye in Sequencher 4.2 (Gene Codes Corp.), aligned sequences with Clustal W 1.83 (Thompson et al., 1994), and translated coding regions into amino acid sequences using MacClade 4.08 (Maddison and Maddison, 2005). I deposited all sequences in GenBank.

Phylogenetic Analyses

I used maximum parsimony (MP; Farris, 1983), maximum likelihood (ML; Felsenstein, 1981), and Bayesian (BI; Larget and Simon, 1999) methods on the combined P-loop and flanking intron sequences to infer phylogenies of $Na_v1.4$ alleles. I excluded 1.3Kb of a highly variable region of intron 19 (flanking DIII P-loop) where I could not confidently establish positional homology. The final alignment for phylogenetic analyses included over 2.9Kb of $\text{Na}_{v}1.4$ sequence, 1.0Kb from the four coding regions containing the P-loops, and over 1.9Kb from three flanking introns. Because indels often contain phylogenetic signal (Rokas and Holland, 2000; Kawakita et al., 2003) I coded indels in the introns as an additional character (deletion 0, insertion 1). I polarized the dataset with the natricine *Virginia striatula* (Alfaro and Arnold, 2001).

I conducted MP reconstructions in PAUP* (Swofford, 2002) with the branch-andbound algorithm. I weighted characters equally and treated multiple state positions as

polymorphic. To assess nodal support, I used the bootstrap resampling method (Felsenstein, 1985) employing 1000 pseudoreplicates of heuristic searches using TBR branch swapping and 100 random sequence additions in PAUP*.

I executed ML analyses in PAUP* under the HKY+I+Γ model (Hasegawa et al., 1985; Gu et al., 1995; Yang, 1994), the best fit substitution model determined in Modeltest 3.7 (Posada and Crandall, 1998). I performed ML searches with the heuristic search algorithm using TBR branch swapping with 10 random sequence additions (with 10 Γ rate categories). I estimated nodal support with 100 bootstrap pseudoreplicates using TBR branch swapping and 10 random sequence additions.

I performed mixed-model BI analyses in MrBayes 3.1.1 (Huelsenbeck and Ronquist, 2001; Ronquist and Huelsenbeck, 2003). I partitioned nucleotides and indels into two data partitions and conducted searches under the HKY+I+Γ and parsimony approximation model (Tuffley and Steel, 1997). I ran BI analyses for 10 million generations using the default temperature (0.2) with four Markov chains per generation, sampling trees every 1000 generations. I assessed nodal support (i.e., posterior probability) by the frequency of recovered clades sampled after the stable equilibrium (Huelsenbeck and Ronquist, 2001).

Finally, I assessed the congruence between $Na_v1.4$ gene trees and expectations of allelic relationships under a model of a single origin of beneficial alleles with repeated recruitment or horizontal transfer of these alleles. I constrained the MP and ML searches in PAUP* to retain only those trees with a monophyletic TTX resistant clade. I then compared the constrained and unconstrained MP and ML estimates of $Na_v1.4$ phylogeny in PAUP* using a two-tailed Wilcoxon signed-ranks test (Templeton, 1983) and a onetailed multiple-comparisons likelihood ratio test (Shimodaira and Hasegawa, 1999) with 1000 RELL bootstrap pseudoreplicates.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Elevated TTX Resistance in Thamnophis

Thamnophis atratus from a portion of the central California coast (Molino Creek, Santa Cruz Co., and Pilar Point Harbor, San Mateo Co.; Fig. 2.1) display high levels of resistance to TTX (Table 2.1). I estimated the amount of TTX required to slow the average *T. atratus* from the central coast to 50% of its normal crawl speed to be >100 MAMU. In fact, these *T. atratus* are among the most TTX resistant snakes ever recorded, exceeded only by a few populations of *T. sirtalis* (Brodie et al., 2002). Newts would have to be exceptionally toxic to impair these *T. atratus*. Since TTX levels vary extensively within and among populations of *Taricha* (Hanifin et al., 1999, 2008), we might expect a complex pattern of match and mismatch (hotspots and coldspots) between newt toxicity and *T. atratus* TTX resistance across the landscape, consistent with the geographic mosaic model of coevolution (Thompson, 1994, 2005).

Similarly, multiple populations of *T. couchii* in the southern Sierra Nevada possess elevated TTX resistance, with an estimated mean 50% dosage of 86.5 MAMU. The population of *T. sirtalis* from Willow Creek also exhibits extreme TTX resistance, with a mean 50% dosage >100 MAMU, on par with some of the most TTX resistant snake populations known (Brodie et al., 2002). Finally, my broad taxonomic survey confirms the notion that elevated TTX resistance within *Thamnophis* is a derived trait (Motychak et al., 1999); other species of *Thamnophis* (including an eastern population of *T. sirtalis*) and four natricine species display low levels of TTX resistance (<1-2 MAMU).

Genetic Basis of TTX Resistance in Thamnophis

I examined the genetic underpinnings of TTX resistance by characterizing molecular changes in the skeletal muscle sodium channel gene $Na_v1.4$. This locus produces a channel forming protein essential in muscle function that TTX selectively blocks (Hille, 2001). A great deal of literature on the architecture of Na_v loci suggests that TTX fits into the outer pore of the channel (see Lipkind and Fozzard, 2000; Hille, 2001), and replacements at certain residues in the pore dramatically alter TTX binding affinity (Noda et al., 1989; Terlau et al., 1991; Kontis and Goldin, 1993; Pérez-García et al., 1996; Chen et al., 1997; Penzotti et al., 1998; Yamagishi et al., 2001; Choudhary et al., 2003) whereas substitutions elsewhere in the protein appear to have little effect (Hille, 2001).

The entire α -subunit of Na_v1.4 in garter snakes encodes 1875 residues (5658bp) and shows high structural and amino acid homology with mammalian $Na_v1.4$. Additionally, $Na_v1.4$ intron/exon boundaries appear identical between garter snakes and mammals (*Homo* and *Rattus*) (Appendix B). I found no difference between the genomic and coding sequences (cDNA) of $Na_v1.4$, suggesting splice variation or RNA editing does not play a role in modulating TTX resistance in garter snakes. I detected additional variation in $Na_v1.4$ outside the P-loops, ranging from two replacements between *T*. *sirtalis* alleles to as many as seventeen between *T. couchii* and *T. sirtalis*. However, most substitutions occur in the linkers that connect transmembrane segments that have no contact with TTX (Hille, 2001).

Pore loop amino acid sequences of $Na_v1.4$ are nearly invariant across garter snakes and relatives and almost identical to mammalian sequences, suggesting the locus is under strong stabilizing selection because of its critical functional role. Eastern *T. sirtalis* share an I764L in DII and the *T. ordinoides* possesses a K1537R in DIV (positions follow Nav1.4 CDS from *T. sirtalis* AY851746). These substitutions involve nearly equivalent amino acid changes at the extracellular start of the P-loop connecting to the S5 segment. Amino acid replacements in the pore forming structures (pore α -helix, selectivity filter, β-strand; Lipkind and Fozzard, 2000) that interact with TTX are only found in TTX resistant snakes (Fig. 2.2). In contrast to previous work linking TTX resistance to functional changes in the DIV P-loop of $Na_v1.4$ (Geffeney et al., 2005), both *T. atratus* and *T. couchii* show changes in the P-loop of DIII.

Southern Sierra Nevada *T. couchii* have a single M1276T substitution in β-strand of DIII. This site plays a large role in the binding of TTX to the outer pore (Terlau et al., 1991; Pérez-García et al., 1996; Chen et al., 1997; Penzotti et al., 1998; Choudhary et al., 2003; Tikhonov and Zhorov, 2005). Site directed mutagenesis at this position in rat $Na_v1.2$ (brain) and $Na_v1.4$ shows that the amount of TTX required to block current (IC₅₀) generally increases by orders of magnitude when M is replaced (Terlau et al., 1991; Pérez-García et al., 1996; Chen et al., 1997; Penzotti et al., 1998; Choudhary et al., 2003). TTX binding affinity is still dramatically altered (down to 2000-fold decrease) when M is replaced by another neutral or even negatively charged amino acid (Terlau et al., 1991; Penzotti et al., 1998; Choudhary et al., 2003). Thus, the phenotypic effect of the M1276T change in *T. couchii* is probably drastic even though it does not involve a charge change. Because M is hydrophobic and larger than hydrophilic T, I suspect that the M1276T replacement alters the shape of the pore and hence the docking orientation of TTX. An identical $M \rightarrow T$ replacement occurs in both Na_v1.4a and Na_v1.4b of TTX bearing pufferfish (Venkatesh et al., 2005) (teleost fish possess functional duplicates of most Nav genes; Novak et al., 2006) supporting the view that this substitution in *T. couchii* Nav1.4 has a considerable affect on TTX affinity.

Thamnophis atratus possess three amino acid changes in the P-loops of $Na_v1.4$: two in DIII (D1277E and A1281P) and one in DIV (D1568N). The D1277E replacement seems an unlikely candidate for TTX resistance because D and E possess the same charge, are nearly equal in size, and muations at this position generally lead to only minor changes in TTX binding affinity (Terlau et al., 1991; Pérez-García et al., 1996; Choudhary et al., 2003). However, a substitution also involving similar amino acids at a position thought to have little reactivity with TTX still produced a measurable reduction in TTX binding to $Na_v1.4$ in *T. sirtalis* (Geffeney et al., 2005). The I1561V substitution common to the three TTX resistant populations of *T. sirtalis* previously surveyed involves a nearly equivalent replacement, yet this substitution reduced the sensitivity of $Na_v1.4$ to TTX by 50% (Geffeney et al., 2005). It is also interesting to note that the pufferfish *Tetraodon nigroviridis* displays substitutions at the corresponding position in both Na_v1.4 copies, one of which is the same $D\rightarrow E$ (Venkatesh et al., 2005). The A1281P change occurs C-terminal to the β-strand and may be too superficial to influence TTX ligation (Li et al., 2000). However, other residues at the extracellular mouth of the pore have been shown to interact with TTX despite their distance from the selectivity

filter (Kontis and Goldin, 1993; Yamagishi et al., 2001; Carbonneau et al., 2002). Moreover, P always modifies polypeptide secondary structure with a considerable bend because of its ring shape. I cannot be certain this structural change will impact the conformation of the outer pore, but it is intriguing that the identical substitution is observed in Nav1.4a from tetrodotoxic pufferfish of the genus *Takifugu* (Yotsu-Yamashita et al., 2000; Venkatesh et al., 2005). The third P-loop change in *T. atratus* is a D1568N in the β-strand of DIV. This substitution occurs at a site known to play a major role in TTX ligation (Terlau et al., 1991; Pérez-García et al., 1996; Chen et al., 1997; Penzotti et al., 1998; Choudhary et al., 2003; Tikhonov and Zhorov, 2005). Changing $D\rightarrow N$ at this position in rat Na_v1.4 (D1532) yields a 30–40-fold increase in TTX resistance (Penzotti et al., 1998; Choudhary et al., 2003). The large effect of this substitution probably occurs because the hydrogen bond normally formed between TTX and D1568 (Chen et al., 1997; Choudhary et al., 2003; Scheib et al., 2006) is neutralized by uncharged N. Interestingly, the D1568N substitution occurs independently in Willow Creek *T. sirtalis.* Here it is part of a TTX insensitive $Na_v1.4$ allele that contains three other replacements, including I1561V (Geffeney et al., 2005).

One final consideration regarding the Nav1.4 genotype of *T. atratus* is that some of the P-loop substitutions may be compensatory changes (DePristo et al., 2005). Specifically, the two DIII replacements might be required to maintain the function of the outer pore following the drastic D1568N replacement in DIV. Likewise, perhaps only the I1561V and identical D1568N substitutions in Willow Creek *T. sirtalis* actually alter TTX binding affinity and one or two of the other changes in DIV are compensatory.

Evolution of TTX Resistance in Thamnophis

Natural selection is often considered the main force behind convergent evolution by exposing independent lineages to similar selective environments (Futuyma, 1998), yet the genetic basis of convergence may result from a number of factors (Maynard Smith et al., 1985; Wake, 1991; True and Haag, 2001; Budd, 2006). Lineages may independently acquire beneficial mutations at the loci under selection (Zhang and Kumar, 1997; Wood et al., 2005; Arendt and Reznick, 2008; e.g., Stewart et al., 1987; Wichman et al., 1999; Mundy et al., 2004; Woods et al., 2006). Common evolutionary responses and parallel molecular changes may be due to genetic constraints in closely related lineages with similar genetic architecture that bias the response to selection (Schluter, 1996; Schluter et al., 2004; Brakefield, 2007). Alternatively, beneficial alleles may have a single origin and become repeatedly fixed by selection in common environments (Orr and Betancourt, 2001; Hermisson and Pennings, 2005; Barrett and Schluter, 2008; e.g., Colosimo et al., 2005; Hartley et al., 2006). Similarly, adaptive variation may be introduced to populations or species through introgression (Arnold, 1997; Barton, 2001; e.g., Cahan and Keller, 2003; Rieseberg et al., 2003; Grant et al., 2004; Herder et al., 2006).

To trace the origins of elevated TTX resistance in this system as it relates to $\text{Na}_{\text{v}}1.4$ evolution, I established the evolutionary relationships of $\text{Na}_{\text{v}}1.4$ alleles in *Thamnophis*. If elevated TTX resistance in *Thamnophis* has evolved through (i) independent changes in Na_v1.4, then a Na_v1.4 gene tree should roughly match the accepted garter snake phylogeny (de Queiroz et al., 2002). On the other hand, if elevated TTX resistance in *Thamnophis* has occurred through (ii) the recruitment of preexisting adaptive variation or horizontal transfer of beneficial alleles, then the three TTX resistant taxa will form a clade in a $Na_v1.4$ phylogeny, contrary to the *Thamnophis* phylogeny. The three phylogenetic methods (MP, ML, BI) largely agree, and there are only a few areas of disagreement (only BI tree shown), though nodal support is generally weak. Overall, phylogenetic relationships of *Thamnophis* Nav1.4 alleles (Fig. 2.2) are surprisingly concordant with independent estimates of garter snake relationships based on mitochondrial loci (de Queiroz et al., 2002). Assaying TTX resistance across garter snakes and relatives and mapping resistance data onto the Nav1.4 phylogeny indicates that elevated TTX resistance is a derived trait, whereas the ancestral condition for garter snakes and relatives is low TTX resistance (Motychak et al., 1999). Elevated TTX resistance appears to have originated independently at least two times within *Thamnophis* (Fig. 2.2): once in western *T. sirtalis* which are part of a basal group, and possibly once in the common ancestor of *T. atratus* and *T. couchii* which form a well-nested clade. However, if other populations of *T. atratus* or *T. couchii* display ancestral levels of TTX resistance then the reconstruction of this character would be more complex and separate origins of TTX resistance in *T. atratus* and *T. couchii* might well be more parsimonious. Furthermore, the functional mutations in the Nav1.4 P-loops of *T. atratus* and *T. couchii* are not shared but appear uniquely derived. Finally, the hypothesis of a single origin of adaptive $Na_v1.4$ variation linking TTX resistant garter snakes through either incomplete lineage sorting or gene flow was rejected by statistical tests of hypothesis compatibility (MP, Wilcoxon signed-ranks test: L difference = 26 , $z = -5.099$, $p < 0.0001$; ML, SH test: -lnL difference = 88.8277 , p < 0.0001). Thus, the topology of the Na_v1.4 gene tree and the nature of the changes in the P-loops allow us to reject the hypothesis (ii) that elevated TTX resistance occurred through the either the recruitment of standing genetic variation

in Na_v1.4 or introgression of Na_v1.4 alleles. Instead, the data are consistent with the hypothesis (i) elevated TTX resistance has evolved three times independently within *Thamnophis* through convergent changes in $Na_v1.4$.

We now have three parallel ecological arms races between garter snakes and newts. In each case we have a deadly prey species with the same quantifiable defense (TTX), a predator known to consume the prey in the wild, a measurable capacity in the predator to overcome the prey defense (TTX resistance), and phylogenetic information to show that resistance to the prey defense is derived. Thus, the ecological and evolutionary context of elevated TTX resistance in *Thamnophis* displays all the hallmarks of an adaptation (Gould and Vrba, 1982; Rose and Lauder, 1996). I have shown that the predatory adaptation has evolved independently through changes at the same gene. Studying convergent, phylogenetically independent adaptations is a powerful approach to develop generalities about the process of adaptation. These empirical data are useful for understanding the processes generating adaptive variation in parallel ecological settings and the molecular genetic basis of coevolutionary interactions. Future work will examine the roles of standing genetic variation and gene flow among populations within species. As genomic tools become available to non-model systems (McGaugh et al., 2007) and coalescent approaches advance (Hey and Nielsen, 2004; Beerli, 2006; Knowles and Carstens, 2007), it will be possible to examine how selection and gene flow promote the transfer and fixation of beneficial alleles (e.g., Rosenblum et al., 2007) across the coevolutionary landscape.

TABLE 2.1. Locality and sample information for *Thamnophis* and relatives assayed. Mean TTX resistance, and samples sizes for TTX bioassay, individuals genotyped for the four $Na_v1.4$ P-loops, and samples sequenced for entire CDS of $Na_v1.4$.

^atotal number of snakes assayed for TTX resistance including wild caught adults and their offspring born in the lab.

^b mass-adjusted measure of the amount of TTX required to slow a snake to 50% of its normal crawl speed (see methods).

^d from Motychak et al. (1999) but supplemented with additional samples.

^efrom Motychak et al, (1999).

 \degree from Brodie et al. (2005) but supplemented with additional samples.

FIGURE 2.1. Predator-prey interactions between *Thamnophis* and *Taricha* in western North America. Coevolution between *T. sirtalis* and Pacific newts (*Taricha*) which possess the potent neurotoxin tetrodotoxin (TTX) has been the focus of ongoing research for decades (e.g., Brodie, 1968; Brodie et al., 2002), but it was recently discovered that similar interactions between *T. couchii* and their newt prey occur in the southern Sierra Nevada Mountains of California (Brodie et al., 2005). Herein a third parallel arms race is described, involving *T. atratus* and sympatric newts along a portion of the central California coast. Geographic distributions of *T. sirtalis* (grey), *T. atratus* (blue), and *T. couchii* (green) in California and Oregon (Stebbins, 2003) highlighting the three focal populations (red) where garter snakes take newts and are also highly resistant to TTX.

FIGURE 2.2. Map and alignment of adaptive Nav1.4 amino acid replacements alongside phylogeny of Nav1.4 alleles. *(Continued)*

FIGURE 2.2. *(Continued)* Replacements in the pore forming loops (P-loops) of the skeletal muscle sodium channel (Na_v1.4) that interact with TTX occur only in the TTX resistant garter snakes assayed, appear fixed in the three resistant populations, and occur at sites important in TTX ligation. (a) Structure of the α -subunit of Na_v1.4 showing the four domains (DI-DIV), their six transmembrane segments (S1-S6), and the linkers that connect segments (Hille, 2001). The four polypeptide chains that link S5 to S6 (bold) form the outer pore of the channel by folding back into the membrane to create a funnel at the base of which lies a narrow selectivity filter (Lipkind and Fozzard, 1994, 2000; Hille, 2001) that preferentially conducts Na+ ions. A number of residues that form the external mouth, lining, and selectivity filter of the pore bind strongly to TTX (Noda et al., 1989; Terlau et al., 1991; Kontis and Goldin, 1993; Pérez-García et al., 1996; Chen et al., 1997; Penzotti et al., 1998; Yamagishi et al., 2001; Choudhary et al., 2003), which occludes the pore and halts Na+movement (Hille, 2001). Approximate location of amino acid substitutions in DIII and DIV P-loops (color coded to species) discussed in text. (b) Phylogeny of Na_v1.4 alleles from *Thamnophis* and relatives based on the coding regions of all four Ploops (1.0kb) and linked introns (1.9kb). The gene tree (black) closely resembles independent estimates of garter snake phylogeny based on mtDNA (grey; de Queiroz et al., 2002) and shows that elevated TTX resistance has evolved multiple times in garter snakes and does not involve the recruitment of preexisting adaptive alleles (e.g., Colosimo et al., 2005) or introgression of adaptive variation (e.g., Rieseberg et al., 2003). Topology and nodal support values estimated via mixed-model Bayesian tree searches (Huelsenbeck and Ronquist, 2001); some outgroups pruned for simplicity; colors on branches correspond to colors on map (Fig. 2.1) except for resistant *T.sirtalis* (red). (c) Amino acid sequences of the DIII and DIV P-loops alongside measures of whole animal resistance to TTX. Though all four P-loops were examined, only the DIII and DIV regions hold variation in garter snakes, but here amino acid substitutions (arrows and replacements color coded to species) occur at critical residues that change the structure and electrostatic environment of the pore and alter TTX binding. Human sequence given for comparison (M81758), but positions follow $Na_v1.4$ CDS from *T. sirtalis* AY851746; structures of the pore labeled below human sequence (\star , selectivity filter; α, α-helix; β, β-strand).

CHAPTER 3

SIMPLE GENETIC ARCHITECTURE OF A SNAKE FEEDING ADAPTATION: GENETICS OF TETRODOTOXIN RESISTANCE IN GARTER SNAKES (*THAMNOPHIS*)

INTRODUCTION

A central goal of evolutionary biology is to understand the genetics surrounding adaptive variation (Futuyma, 1998; Feder, 2007; Ellegren and Sheldon, 2008). The major promise of the modern synthesis is that theoretical and empirical work on variation at the population level firmly links microevolution to the broad scale macroevolutionary patterns apparent in nature (Futuyma, 1998; Mayr and Provine, 1998). We can certainly measure the origins, evolution, and persistence of consequential mutations in controlled laboratory settings, and place these data into a well-developed framework of adaptive evolution (Orr, 2005a, 2005b; Phillips, 2005; e.g., Wichman et al., 1999; Rokyta et al., 2005; Miller et al., 2006; Weinreich et al., 2006). Yet our ability to describe the effects of like genetic changes on the rate and direction of phenotypic evolution in real communities is only now emerging (Feder and Mitchell-Olds, 2003; Ellegren and Sheldon, 2008; Stinchcombe and Hoekstra, 2008; e.g., Gompel et al., 2005; Hoekstra et al., 2006; Joron et al., 2006; Storz et al., 2007). A significant impediment to progress is the availability of empirical systems with well-defined ecological contexts and selection pressures, and with a clearly defined genetic basis for adaptation.

The interaction between toxic newts (*Taricha*) and several resistant predatory garter snakes (*Thamnophis*) provides a model system for the study of adaptation variation

and predator-prey coevolution (e.g., Brodie and Brodie, 1999; Brodie et al., 2002). This system is ideal because the traits that mediate the coevolution are easily decomposed, geographically variable, and at least partly controlled by a well-studied gene family. Newts of the genus *Taricha* possess the neurotoxin tetrodotoxin (TTX) (Mosher et al., 1964; Wakely et al., 1966; Brodie et al., 1974; Yotsu et al., 1990), which acts as a powerful chemical defense against vertebrate predators (Brodie, 1968; Brodie et al., 1974). Tetrodotoxin binds selectively to the outer pore of voltage-gated sodium channels in nerves and muscles (Lipkind and Fozzard, 2000; Hille, 2001), blocking the movement of sodium ions (Na⁺) across the cell membrane and halting the propagation of action potentials (Kao and Levinson, 1986; Hille, 2001). By arresting nerve impulses in muscle and nervous tissue, TTX causes immobilization, respiratory failure, and often, death (Brodie, 1968; How et al., 2003; Isbister and Kiernan, 2005). In spite the fact that TTX is one of the most powerful neurotoxins known (Medinsky and Klaassen, 1996), three species of *Thamnophis* have independently evolved high tolerance of TTX (Chapter 2) and prey on sympatric newts (Brodie and Brodie, 1990; Brodie et al., 2005; Chapter 2). The physiological and genetic mechanisms at least partially responsible for elevated TTX resistance involve slight alterations in the outer pore (P-loop) of the skeletal muscle sodium channel $(Na_v1.4)$ that dramatically reduce the affinity of TTX to this protein (Geffeney et al., 2002, 2005; Chapter 2).

Certain P-loop replacements in Na_v genes alter TTX ligation to sodium channels (Noda et al., 1989; Terlau et al., 1991; Kontis and Goldin 1993; Pérez-García et al., 1996; Chen et al., 1997; Penzotti et al., 1998; Yamagishi et al., 2001; Choudhary et al., 2003) and these changes have visible physiological effects at the organismal level (Geffeney et

al., 2005; Venkatesh et al., 2005; Maruta et al., 2008). Thus, Na_v loci can be considered genes of major effect, yet we still lack a good grasp on the contribution of individual alleles to TTX resistance. Here, I take advantage of the striking variability in TTX resistance seen in three *T*. *atratus* and *T. sirtalis* populations along the coast of central California (Fig. 3.1). I examine the relationship between allelic variation in Na_v1.4 and TTX resistance in these populations, and how this relationship bears on our understanding of adaptive variation in garter snakes and the coevolutionary dynamics between newts and snakes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Bioassays

I collected TTX resistance data from 83 *T*. *atratus* and 47 *T. sirtalis* from three populations along the central coast of California: Molino Creek, Santa Cruz Co.; Gilroy, Santa Clara Co.; Santa Lucia Preserve, Monterey Co. (Fig. 3.1; Appendix A). The data from Molino Creek *T*. *atratus* are from Chapter 2.

I measured TTX resistance using the same bioassay of whole organism performance detailed in Chapter 2 (see also Brodie and Brodie, 1990; Brodie et al., 2002; Ridenhour et al., 2004). However, some of the *T. sirtalis* were so resistant to TTX that they were essentially unaffected by standard injections. I administered additional TTX doses to a subset of these snakes and found they could still run above 50% of their normal ability at over 200, 500, and 1000 MAMUs. I thus assigned a minimum 50% estimate of 100 MAMUs to all unaffected *T. sirtalis* (based on the highest common dose given), recognizing that the actual measures of TTX resistance must be much higher.

Sequence Data

I collected DNA sequence data from $Na_v1.4$ from each garter snake assayed for TTX resistance. I followed the same laboratory and data editing procedures outlined in Chapter 2. And as in Chapter 2, I also focused on variation in portions of the four domains (DI-DIV) that code for the outer pore (P-loops) because TTX interacts with residues of the outer pore (Lipkind and Fozzard, 2000; Hille, 2001) and changes at some of these sites in $Na_v1.4$ are thought to contribute TTX resistance in snakes (Geffeney et al., 2005; Chapter 2, 4) and pufferfish (Yotsu-Yamashita et al., 2000; Venkatesh et al., 2005; Maruta et al., 2008).

I scored a $Na_v1.4$ sequence as a unique allele if it possessed amino acid replacements in or nearby the pore forming structures of the P-loops (pore α -helix, selectivity filter, β-strand; Lipkind and Fozzard, 2000) that interact with TTX. This notation for alleles includes the gene name followed by a subscript of one letter amino acid abbreviations given in the order those derived allelic substitutions occur in the locus. This nomenclature reflects the molecular differences between the ancestral garter snake gene sequence (Na_v1.4_{anc}) and derived Na_v1.4 variants, rather than putative phenotypic effects or dominance attributes of alleles. I deposited all sequences in GenBank.

Phenotype-Genotype Matching

I assigned each phenotype to its respective genotype then tested for overall differences in TTX resistance between the genotypes with a single factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) using restricted maximum likelihood in SAS v9.1 (SAS Institute). I then used *post hoc* tests to assess the significance of pairwise differences between

genotypes. I also determined the statistical association between genotype (allelic variation in $Na_v1.4$) and phenotype (variation in TTX resistance) by estimating the variance components using the same single factor ANOVA. The percentage of variance explained (PVE) by the genotype is simply the proportion of the total variance attributed to the genotype.

I evaluated allelic dominance in Na_v1.4 using the dominance coefficient (h) , a simple metric for assessing the degree and direction of dominance influencing a trait. In the most straightforward case, a diallelic system with three genotypes, *h* can be calculated by setting the mean trait value of the genotype with the most visible effect to one $(AA =$ 1), scaling the mean of the heterozygous class to this measure and solving for the proportion of the homozygous value expressed in heterozygotes $(Aa = 1 - h)$. If $h = 0.5$ then the alleles have a purely additive effect and there is no dominance, but when $h \neq 0.5$ $(0 \leq h \leq 1)$ then some form of dominance is apparent, with extreme cases of overdominance and underdominance reflected by $h < 0$ and $h > 1$, respectively. Ideally, h can be calculated over a suit of loci affecting a trait and include allele frequency information to account for the effects of selection (Falconer and Mackay, 1996; Deng, 1998). Because I pooled data from separate populations and included some parent offspring pairs, these allele frequencies cannot be considered representative of the actual population values, so I did not consider the effects of selection on $Na_v1.4$ dominance. Additionally, I only assessed dominance in *T. sirtalis* because I did not find any fully heterozygous *T. atratus*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Variation in TTX Resistance

Central coastal California populations of *T. atratus* and *T. sirtalis* (Fig. 3.1) possess dramatic phenotypic variation in TTX resistance. In fact, TTX variation within populations of *T. atratus* and *T. sirtalis* is equivalent to the range of resistance seen across the entire clade of *Thamnophis*, with snakes possessing natively low levels (Motychak et al., 1999; Chapter 2) to those on par with the most TTX resistant snakes ever recorded (Brodie et al., 2002; Chapter 2). For example, the amount of TTX required to slow Santa Lucia Preserve *T. atratus* to 50% of their normal crawl speed ranged from 2−100 MAMUs. Likewise, 50% TTX dosages in *T. sirtalis* from this same locality ranged from 6−>100 MAMUs.

Variation in Nav1.4

I found four Na_v1.4 alleles in central coastal populations of *T. atratus* (Na_v1.4_{anc}, $Na_{\nu}1.4_{\text{EPN}}$, $Na_{\nu}1.4_{\text{EP}}$, $Na_{\nu}1.4_{\text{N}}$. The first, $Na_{\nu}1.4_{\text{anc}}$, is the same TTX sensitive $Na_{\nu}1.4$ allele found across the garter snake phylogeny (Chapter 2). The three derived *T. atratus* alleles can be distinguished from $\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{anc}}$ as follows: $\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{EPN}}$ contains a D1277E in the DIII β-strand, an A1281P C-terminal to the DIII β-strand, and a D1568N in the DIV βstrand; Na_v1.4_{EP} holds the two DIII changes, D1277E and A1281P; Na_v1.4_N possesses only the DIV replacement, D1568N. The four alleles are distributed among only four genotypes in these *T. atratus* populations (Fig. 3.2).

I found only two alleles in the sympatric populations of *T. sirtalis* ($Na_v1.4_{anc}$, Na_v1.4_{LVNV}). As with *T. atratus*, some *T. sirtalis* possess the same allele that appears to

represent the ancestral garter snake Na_v1.4 sequence (Chapter 2). The derived *T. sirtalis* allele differs from this putative ancestor through four mutations in the P-loop of DIV; Na_v1.4_{LVNV} is characterized by an I1555L and I1561 in the α -helix and a D1568N and G1569V in the β-strand. As expected, the two *T. sirtalis* Na_{v} 1.4 alleles occur in three genotypes (Fig. 3.3).

Most of the $Na_v1.4$ alleles have been identified and detailed previously (Geffeney et al., 2005; Chapter 2), and the two *T. sirtalis* alleles have been functionally expressed (Geffeney et al., 2005). Briefly, the replacements in the P-loops of the derived alleles are known to reduce the binding affinity of TTX to the outer pore of $Na_v1.4$ by changing pore structure and environment (Geffeney et al., 2005; Chapter 2). Besides the fact that substitutions in the derived $Na_v1.4$ alleles occur at sites known to play a major role in TTX ligation, nearly every one of these sites also shows coincident replacements in distantly related snakes that also consume prey with TTX (Chapter 4) and in TTX bearing pufferfish (Yotsu-Yamashita et al., 2000; Venkatesh et al., 2005; Maruta et al., 2008).

Relationship between Variation in Nav1.4 and TTX Resistance

Partitioning *T*. *atratus* phenotypes into their respective genotypes reveals obvious differences between the groups (Table 3.1; Fig. 3.2). Snakes homozygous for the ancestral Na_v1.4 allele exhibit the least amount of TTX resistance (\bar{x} = 7.41, SD = 3.99) while the next lowest group is composed of snakes heterozygous for $Na_v1.4_N$ and $Na_v1.4_{anc}$ (\bar{x} = 16.47, SD 18.08). These two genotypes display considerably less TTX resistance (t-value = -5.06 , $P < 0.0001$; t-value = -3.77 , $P = 0.0003$) than snakes with the Na_v1.4_{EPN} allele (\bar{x} = 47.84, SD 39.80). Thus, *T. atratus* genotypes with Na_v1.4 alleles

with a greater number of derived P-loop substitutions exhibit higher TTX resistance than those possessing alleles with fewer or no P-loop replacements. Whether the effects of the individual alleles is additive or ordinal remains to be determined pending additional phenotypic data from the full array of expected genotypes. Nevertheless, the association between Na_v1.4 polymorphism and TTX resistance is significant (F-value = 10.100, $P \lt \theta$) 0.0001) and the proportion of the phenotype explained (PVE) by the genotype is substantial (29%) in *T*. *atratus* (Table 3.2).

Matching *T*. *sirtalis* phenotypes to their respective genotypes also reveals dramatic differences between the genotypes (Table 3.1; Fig. 3.3). Snakes homozygous for Na_v1.4_{anc} show moderate levels of TTX resistance (\bar{x} = 18.97, SD = 8.58) while those heterozygous for $Na_v1.4_{LNNV}$ and $Na_v1.4_{anc}$ or homozygous for $Na_v1.4_{LNNV}$ display extremely high resistance ($\bar{x} = 100.00$, SD = 0; $\bar{x} = 100.00$, SD = 0). Snakes with these later two genotypes are significantly less affected by TTX than those homozygous for Na_v1.4_{anc} (t-value = -45.54, $P < 0.0001$; t-value = -46.31, $P < 0.0001$), but indistinguishable from one another (t-value = 0, $P = 1$). Thus, the derived Na_v1.4_{LVNV} allele appears to exhibits complete dominance $(h = 0)$. Our estimate of dominance is admittedly rough because I set all the 50% MAMU scores of highly resistant *T*. *sirtalis* to the same value (lowest common dose), forcing heterozygotes and dominant homozygotes to appear identical (see Materials and Methods). At the molecular genetic level, it seems reasonable to assume that heterozygotes are less resistant to TTX because half of the skeletal muscle sodium channels in these snakes should have been translated from the Nav1.4anc allele. Yet at the organismal level, *T*. *sirtalis* heterozygous or homozygous for $Na_v1.4_{LVNV}$ appear so immune to TTX that these genotypes may be functionally

equivalent. Globally, the relationship between variation in $Na_v1.4$ and TTX resistance in these *T*. *sirtalis* populations is strong (F-value = 1330.820, $P < 0.0001$), with a remarkable PVE (98%) by the genotype (Table 3.2). However, our procedure of setting all highly resistant *T*. *sirtalis* to the same 50% dosage created a very homogenous dataset and I consider this PVE an overestimate.

Here, Na_v1.4 is clearly a large effect locus, explaining 29% to 98% of TTX resistance in *T*. *atratus* and *T. sirtalis*, respectively. Nevertheless, allelic variation in $Na_v1.4$ cannot solely account for whole animal resistance in garter snakes. First, the proportion of the phenotype explained by the genotype in *T*. *atratus* suggests the contribution of additional loci or molecular mechanisms. Second, $Na_v1.4$ expression is confined to skeletal muscle tissue (Trimmer et al., 1989, 1990; Goldin, 2001), yet the central nervous system and some peripheral nerves are sensitive to TTX (Goldin, 2002; Geffeney and Rubin, 2006). It seems evident that these tissues must also be defended against TTX to produce a fully resistant phenotype. I propose two, non-exclusive hypotheses to explain TTX resistance at the organismal level in garter snakes: 1) changes in the spatial patterns of Na_v expression; 2) parallel changes in P-loops across the Na_v gene family.

In mammals, nine different Na_v genes are functionally expressed in specific tissues with excitable cells (Plummer and Meisler, 1999; Goldin, 2001; Hille, 2001). A third of these $(Na_v1.5, Na_v1.8, Na_v1.9)$ are natively resistant to TTX (Goldin, 2002; Geffeney and Rubin, 2006). Furthermore, regional expression profiles change during organismal ontogeny, with some Na_v loci dominating certain tissues during early development then quickly yielding to other gene family members as the organism

matures (Beckh et al., 1989; Trimmer et al., 1990; Goldin, 2001). Thus, modification of the Na_v regulatory apparatus could produce resistant tissues through suppression of TTX sensitive sodium channels and expression of resistant channels. However, sodium channels appear highly specialized to their respective tissues (Goldin, 2001; Hille, 2001), so drastic alterations to the spatial expression of Na_v genes might disrupt proper tissue function (Geffeney and Rubin, 2006).

Alternatively, or perhaps in conjunction with minor changes in sodium channel expression, other TTX sensitive Na_v loci may have encountered adaptive mutations similar to those in derived $Na_v1.4$ alleles. Because even single mutations can dramatically alter TTX binding affinity (e.g., Noda et al., 1989; Terlau et al., 1991; Geffeney et al., 2005; Tikhonov and Zhorov, 2005; Venkatesh et al., 2005), only slight modification of central and peripheral nerve Na_v genes may be required. Additionally, most Na_v paralogs are physically close to their nearest relatives (Plummer and Meisler, 1999; Goldin, 2002; Novak et al., 2006), and in mammals, seven of the nine genes are regionally clustered within two chromosomes (Plummer and Meisler, 1999; Goldin, 2002). Thus, coincident P-loop changes in separate sodium channel genes might immediately become linked. If recombination rates are low, selection could easily fix such linkage groups in populations before recombination breaks apart adaptive allelic combinations.

I favor this second hypothesis of convergent gene family evolution to explain whole animal TTX resistance in garter snakes and suggest that both *T*. *atratus* and *T. sirtalis* demonstrate the extremes of this scenario. In the case of *T. sirtalis*, derived Na_{v} variants have become (or remain) linked, forming a coadapted gene complex that

produces an extreme phenotype. In *T*. *atratus*, on the other hand, recombination has probably disassociated the linkages between TTX resistant alleles at separate Na_v loci. Some *T. atratus* will still inherit this suit of adaptive variation and possess the "Na_v supergene" that produces acute resistance. Others will possess varying degrees of mismatch between resistant Na_v genes and express corresponding levels of TTX resistance. Identification and characterization of the P-loops in all TTX sensitive sodium channels in *Thamnophis* should eventually provide a complete picture of the molecular mechanisms responsible for elevated TTX resistance.

Simple Genetic Architecture and Coevolution

Most phenotypic traits are thought to be governed by a complex interplay between many genes (Falconer and Mackay, 1996). However, it has become increasingly clear that complex phenotypic traits are often controlled by a small number of loci of major effect (e.g., Doebley and Stec, 1991; Cohn and Tickle, 1999; Abzhanov et al., 2004; Alberston et al., 2005; Steiner et al., 2007; Sutter et al., 2007). While our view of the genetic architecture of adaptations is rapidly changing, both the infinite alleles and quantitative trait locus (QTL) viewpoints are certainly valid (Orr and Coyne, 1992). Each genetic model also makes specific predictions about the tempo and mode of evolution. Adaptation can occur rapidly and through large steps when the genetic architecture of a trait under selection is relatively simple (e.g., Hawthorne and Via, 2001; Peichel et al., 2001; ffrench-Constant et al., 2004; Albertson and Kocher, 2006). Fixation of standing variation or a few new mutations of large effect can rapidly drive phenotypic evolution (Barrett and Schluter, 2008; e.g., Colosimo et al., 2005; Hartley et al., 2006).

Yet phenotypic evolution will proceed more slowly and through incremental steps if adaptive traits are controlled by numbers of loci (Falconer and Mackay, 1996). Polygenetic adaptations will require many mutations, most of which are expected to be recessive and take longer to spread to fixation than dominant alleles (Falconer and Mackay, 1996). Furthermore, some loci might be constrained by epistatic interactions or pleiotropy, others might experience different mutation or recombination rates, backmutating or picking up disadvantageous recombinants or mutations while beneficial alleles fix at other loci. So unless multiple loci change in concert, adaptive evolution should proceed gradually.

The genetic architecture of adaptations is certainly important in understanding the dynamics of coevolution as well (Bohannan and Lenski, 2000; Thompson, 2005; Wade, 2007; e.g., Yoshida et al., 2007). Cycles of arms-race evolution wherein predator (exploiter) phenotypes continually "chase" prey (victim) phenotypes are expected regardless of whether the genetic architecture underlying the traits is simple or complex (Sasaki, 2000; Agrawal and Lively, 2002, 2003; Kopp and Gavrilets, 2006; Nuismer et al., 2007). However, when the traits that mediate the coevolution have a simple genetic basis, reciprocal selection can more easily fix all the adaptive alleles, leading to the evolution of extreme phenotypes in which the prey "loses" the arm-race (Sasaki, 2000; Kopp and Gavrilets, 2006; Nuismer et al., 2007). Conversely, coevolutionary cycles are predicted to be more stable and dynamic under a multilocus model because adaptive alleles in the predator rarely change in harmony, allowing the prey to stay "ahead" in the arms-race (Kopp and Gavrilets, 2006; Nuismer et al., 2007). Thus, detailing the genetic architecture of the traits that mediate the coevolution is vital in understanding not only

the rate and direction of phenotypic evolution, but also in considering the outcome of coevolution.

The molecular basis of adaptive TTX resistance in *Thamnophis* appears relatively simple, probably involving a few replacements in a handful of genes. Simple genetic architecture underlying the traits that mediate the coevolution should allow for a rapid back-and-forth evolutionary arms race, but also potential "escape" from the arms race by the predator (Sasaki, 2000; Kopp and Gavrilets, 2006; Nuismer et al., 2007). Though we only have a handle on the genetics underlying the predatory counter adaptation, both of these predictions appear to have been met. Coevolution between *T. sirtalis* and *T. granulosa* in the Pacific Northwest seems to have initiated only recently, probably during the Late Pleistocene (Janzen et al., 2002; Ridenhour et al., 2007). A range-wide survey of trait matching between *T. sirtalis* and *Taricha* showed that one-third of western *T. sirtalis* populations possess such acute TTX resistance that they are essentially "winning" the arms-race (Hanifin et al., 2008). Characterization of additional of Na_v loci in *Thamnophis* and continued phenotype-genotype matching at the population level will help determine whether the evolution of a Na_v supergene in garter snakes frequently creates an insurmountable counter measure to which newts cannot respond, or whether recombination and gene flow consistently decouple adaptive alleles and keep newts competitive in this arms race.

TABLE 3.1. Differences in TTX resistance between $Na_v1.4$ genotypes in central California populations of *T. atratus* and *T. sirtalis*. Differences assessed with *post hoc* ttests of the least squares means from a single factor ANOVA.

Taxon		
Genotypes compared		t-value P -value
T. atratus		
$Na_{v}1.4_{anc}Na_{v}1.4_{anc}$ vs $Na_{v}1.4_{N}Na_{v}1.4_{anc}$	-1.01	0.3147
$\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{anc}}\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{anc}}$ vs $\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{FPN}}\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{FP}}$	-1.10	0.2748
$\rm Na_{v}1.4_{\rm arc}$ $\rm Na_{v}1.4_{\rm arc}$ vs $\rm Na_{v}1.4_{\rm EPN}$ $\rm Na_{v}1.4_{\rm EPN}$	-5.06	≤ 0.0001
$\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{N}}\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{anc}}$ vs $\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{FPN}}\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{FPP}}$	-0.79	0.4306
$\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{N}}\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{anc}}$ vs $\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{FPN}}\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{FPN}}$	-3.77	0.0003
$\rm Na_{v}1.4_{EPN}$ $\rm Na_{v}1.4_{EPI}$ vs $\rm Na_{v}1.4_{EPN}$ $\rm Na_{v}1.4_{EPN}$	-0.22	0.8254
<i>T.</i> sirtalis		
$\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{anc}}$ $\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{anc}}$ vs $\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{LVNV}}$ $\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{anc}}$	-45.54	< 0.0001
$\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{anc}}$ $\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{anc}}$ vs $\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{L} \text{VNV}}$ $\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{L} \text{VNV}}$	-46.31	< 0.0001
$\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{L{\text{NNV}}} \text{Na}_{v}1.4_{\text{anc}}$ vs $\text{Na}_{v}1.4_{L{\text{NNV}}} \text{Na}_{v}1.4_{L{\text{NNV}}}$	Ω	

TABLE 3.2. Percentage of phenotypic variance explained by $Na_v1.4$ genotype (PVE) in central California populations of *T. atratus* and *T. sirtalis*. Variance components estimated with a single factor ANOVA.

FIGURE 3.1. Geographic distribution and collection sites of *T. atratus* and *T. sirtalis* in California. Range of *T. atratus* (blue) and *T. sirtalis* (grey) follow Stebbins (2003); three focal populations (red) are: Molino Creek, Santa Cruz Co.; Gilroy, Santa Clara Co.; Santa Lucia Preserve, Monterey Co.

FIGURE 3.2. TTX resistance in central California populations of *T. atratus* allocated by $Na_v1.4$ genotype. Allele names and actual DIII and DIV P-loop sequences highlighting the critical residues that characterize those alleles are provided for each genotype, along with mean TTX resistance, standard deviation (error bars), and sample size.

FIGURE 3.3. TTX resistance in central California populations of *T. sirtalis* allocated by Nav1.4 genotype. Allele names and actual DIII and DIV P-loop sequences highlighting the critical residues that characterize those alleles are provided for each genotype, along with mean TTX resistance, standard deviation (error bars), and sample size.

CHAPTER 4

CONVERGENCE AND CONSTRAINTS IN SNAKE-AMPHIBIAN COEVOLUTION

INTRODUCTION

Darwin (1859) considered evolutionary convergence to be a highly unlikely outcome of the process of natural selection, yet the repeated evolution of similar phenotypes in response to similar ecological pressures provides some of the most compelling evidence of adaptive evolution. Striking examples such as replicated adaptations in microbial populations (Wichman et al., 1999; Cooper et al., 2003; Woods et al., 2006), the rapid appearance of identical insecticide resistance across diverse taxa (ffrench-Constant, 1994; ffrench-Constant et al., 2004), the repeated evolution of specific ecomorphologies in lizard (Losos et al., 1998, 2003) and fish (Meyer et al., 1990; Meyer, 1993) communities, and even redundancy in plant and animal guilds through time (Cowen, 2004) all suggest that phenotypic convergence is a pervasive evolutionary trend. What is less clear, however, is the role evolutionary constraints play in producing phenotypic similarity (Maynard Smith et al., 1985; Wake, 1991; Brakefield and Roskam, 2006; Brakefield, 2007).

Evolutionary constraints, that is, physical, structural, or genetic (including development) factors that restrict or bias the amount and pattern of variation upon which natural selection can act (Futuyma, 1998) have certainly influenced the tempo and mode of evolution (Maynard Smith et al., 1985; Wake, 1991; Brakefield and Roskam, 2006; Brakefield, 2007). Ideally, a quantitative genetics approach would be instrumental to the study of constraints by helping define the adaptive landscape of traits, detailing the

variation accessible to natural selection, and thus predicting the genetic and phenotypic response (Arnold, 1992). Yet there are few empirical examples of an evolutionary constraint at the molecular level because tracing the origin and fitness consequence of each failed or successful mutation through time is rarely feasible (Miller et al., 2006; Weinreich et al., 2006). An effective alternative for assessing the role of constraints is to look for bias in the outcome of replicated events against a background of possible solutions. Aside from microbial systems experiencing artificial selection, natural systems wherein the same adaptation has arisen independently multiple times should provide a useful vehicle for the study of evolutionary constraints. What is additionally required is a detailed knowledge of the ecology, genetics, and phylogeny of the adaptation to understand whether evolution has been restricted or unencumbered.

I investigated the genetic basis of convergent adaptations in snake-amphibian coevolution. Snakes are the chief vertebrate predators of amphibians (Greene, 1997; Toledo et al., 2007), which rely heavily on noxious or poisonous secretions for defense (Brodie, 1983; Duellman and Treub, 1986). Because snakes do not masticate and lack limbs, they cannot mechanically separate the toxic portions of amphibians, but must consume prey whole and thus become fully exposed to amphibian toxins (Williams et al., 2003). Nevertheless, a number of snake and amphibian taxa have entered coevolutionary arms-races characterized by adaptation and counter-adaptation (Greene, 1997). Here, I focus on the coevolution between snakes that prey on frogs and salamanders that possess tetrodotoxin (TTX) because the neuro-physiological effects of TTX are understood (Hille, 2001), the interaction between one predator-prey pair is well characterized (Brodie et al., 2002; Hanifin et al., 2008), and knowledge of the biochemical basis of TTX

resistance is emerging (Terlau et al., 1991; Kontis and Goldin, 1993; Penzotti et al., 1998; Yamagishi et al., 2001; Choudhary et al., 2003; Tikhonov and Zhorov, 2005; Scheib et al., 2006; Santarelli et al., 2007). Tetrodotoxin binds to the pore of voltage-gated sodium channels (Na_v) in nerves and muscles, blocking the movement of sodium ions (Na^+) into these cells and halting action potentials that control nerve impulses (Kao and Levinson, 1986; Hille, 2001). By paralyzing nerves and excitable muscle cells, TTX causes immobilization, respiratory failure, and often, death (Brodie, 1968; How et al., 2003; Isbister and Kiernan, 2005). However, in some populations of the garter snake *Thamnophis sirtalis* that prey on the TTX bearing newt *Taricha granulosa*, muscle sodium channels (Na_v1.4) are resistant to TTX (Geffeney et al., 2002). Examination of Nav1.4 in resistant *T. sirtalis* and pufferfish that possess TTX shows that amino acid substitutions at the outer pore changes the binding affinity of TTX to this sodium channel (Geffeney et al., 2005; Venkatesh et al., 2005; Maruta et al., 2008).

To understand the role of evolutionary constraints in snake-amphibian coevolution, I examined the genetic underpinnings of TTX resistance across a number of unique snake lineages. Specifically, I determined whether repeated phenotypic evolution results from convergent genetic changes more frequently than would be expected by chance, and the possible sources predisposing snakes to repeated genetic responses. If adaptive evolution is unencumbered by biophysical or genetic constraints then we might expect the repeated evolution of similar phenotypes to occur through dissimilar genetic pathways because of the unique evolutionary history and genetic makeup of independent species, the stochastic nature of mutation, redundancy in developmental systems, and the over-riding power of natural selection (Gould, 1989a; True and Haag, 2001; Budd, 2006). However, if adaptive evolution is often channeled along genetic lines of least resistance (Schluter, 1996; Schluter et al., 2004; Brakefield and Roskam, 2006; Brakefield, 2007), constrained by the biophysical properties of interacting molecules (DePristo et al., 2005; Miller et al., 2006; Weinreich et al., 2006), or limited by developmental and structural constraints (Maynard Smith et al., 1985; Gould, 1989b; Wake, 1991), then we might expect the independent evolution of phenotypic similarity to occur commonly through the same genetic steps. A relatively narrow genetic response of independent lineages to the same selective pressure could be taken as the genetic signature of an evolutionary constraint. Here, the chemically mediated coevolution involves prey species that share a common deadly toxin, so their respective predators might have responded by evolving the same means of circumventing the toxin, or they might have evolved different mechanisms of exploitation. Because TTX binds so selectively to the pore of nerve and muscle sodium channels, however, there may be only a few mechanistically similar adaptations that allow the predator species to overcome the toxin. Given an identical selective agent (TTX), possible biophysical constraints in circumventing that agent, similarities in the genetic architecture of the traits under selection due to common ancestry, and the often oligogenic nature of adaptations, I predict that convergent phenotypic evolution in this case has been tightly constrained to occur through the same genetic pathway. To test this prediction I examine the genetic underpinnings of TTXmediated coevolution between snakes and amphibians from across the globe.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Bioassays

To provide a phylogenetic perspective on the evolution of elevated TTX resistance in snakes, and aid in the interpretation of $Na_n1.4$ sequence data, I collected TTX resistance data from a diverse sample of colubroids (Appendix A). I collected data from 12 snake species ($n = 36$) representing most of the major colubroid lineages (Lawson et al., 2005; Wiens et al., 2008) and from one outgroup taxon $(n = 5)$. I augmented these data with results from Brodie (1968), Motychak et al. (1999), Brodie et al. (2005), and Chapter 2 to provide the most complete picture of TTX resistance in squamate reptiles to date (Fig. 4.1). I measured TTX resistance using the same bioassay of whole organism performance detailed in Chapter 2 (see also Brodie and Brodie, 1990; Brodie et al., 2002; Ridenhour et al., 2004).

Sequence Data

To determine whether snake lineages have independently acquired TTX resistance through similar genetic modifications, I examined DNA sequence variation in portions of the four domains (DI-DIV) that code for the outer pore (P-loops) of $Na_v1.4$. I sequenced snakes known to prey on TTX laden amphibians, their sister groups, and additional taxa to provide a robust phylogenetic perspective (Fig. 4.1). I focused on the P-loops because TTX interacts with residues of the outer pore (Lipkind and Fozzard, 2000; Hille, 2001) and changes in some of these sites in $Na_v1.4$ are at least partly responsible for TTX resistance in *T. sirtalis* (Geffeney et al., 2005) and TTX bearing

pufferfish (Venkatesh et al., 2005). I followed the same laboratory and data editing procedures outlined in Chapter 2. I deposited all sequences in GenBank.

Assessing Constraints on Nav1.4

Sodium channels are highly specialized proteins, and the amino acids that form the outer pore and selectivity filter interact in complex ways to create the optimal environment for the selective permeation of $Na⁺$ ions (Hille, 2001). However, the same P-loop residues that permit selectivity and permeability of $Na⁺$, also interact strongly with TTX through a combination of hydrogen and ionic bonds, steric attraction, and cation- π interaction (Terlau et al., 1991; Kontis and Goldin, 1993; Penzotti et al., 1998; Yamagishi et al., 2001; Choudhary et al., 2003; Tikhonov and Zhorov, 2005; Scheib et al., 2006; Santarelli et al., 2007). As such, changes that reduce the affinity of TTX to the outer pore will likely negatively impact the molecular sieving of the sodium channel. If antagonistic pleiotropy exists within $Na_v1.4$, then we should find convergence at the molecular level because there is probably a limited pool of replacements that can reduce TTX ligation and preserve channel function. Thus, to understand whether constraints have influenced the evolution of TTX resistance in snakes, I sought to: 1) quantify any tradeoff between TTX resistance and sodium channel function; 2) assess bias in the pattern of observed mutations.

I evaluated the potential tradeoff between TTX resistance and sodium channel performance by pulling data from studies that measured the effects of individual replacements on both TTX block and $Na⁺$ permeability. I excluded reports that provided only ratios from which we could not calculate actual values of either TTX resistance or

Na⁺ conductance. This left three studies of site directed mutagenesis (Terlau et al., 1991; Backx et al., 1992; Yamagishi et al., 2001) where the data on TTX sensitivity are inhibition concentrations of TTX (nM) required to reduce peak Na⁺ current by 50% (IC₅₀) in the wild type and single mutant channels, and the data on $Na⁺$ permeability are measures of single channel conductance (pS). I log-transformed the TTX data, and adjusted the $Na⁺$ conductance data of each study by setting wild type measures to 1 and scaling the conductance values of each mutant to its respective wild type. I then performed a simple regression on all the data $(n = 31)$ in StatView 5.0.1. (SAS Institute Inc.).

Ionic selectivity is also determined by the molecular architecture of the outer pore and is an essential function the protein. Unfortunately, few studies provided data on both TTX sensitivity and Na⁺ selectivity in a manner that I could use to estimate functional tradeoffs. However, Terlau et al. (1991) modified the DIII selectivity filter (K), the single most important residue determining selectivity of the sodium channel; a change at this site completely abolishes Na⁺ selectivity (Heinemann et al., 1992; Favre et al., 1996; Chen et al., 1997; Sun et al., 1997; Tsushima et al., 1997). Thus, I removed this mutant and again conducted a simple regression on the data $(n = 30)$ in an attempt to add another variable in our estimate of functional tradeoffs. Nevertheless, future efforts are needed to examine Na⁺ selectivity, permeability, and TTX resistance to provide a more complete picture of the contrasting demands on Na_v loci and the limited range of mutational options open to selection.

Second, I determined whether the pattern of mutations we observed in snakes is clustered or follows a random distribution. If the observed mutations are not distributed randomly among P-loop sites, but are instead clustered, then we have evidence that the genetic response of snakes has been narrowed. I tallied the number of times a site was hit by a mutation for two sets of potentially available sites: 1) all sites of the P-loops ($n = 96$) (Lipkind and Fozzard, 2000); 2) only sites experimentally verified to reduce TTX sensitivity two-fold versus wild type (*n* = 33) (Terlau et al., 1991; Backx et al., 1992; Kontis and Goldin, 1993; Pérez-García et al., 1996; Chen et al., 1997; Penzotti et al., 1998; Yamagishi et al., 2001; Carbonneau et al., 2002; Choudhary et al., 2003), but also including sites with parallel substitutions between snakes and pufferfish still unstudied (*n* = 2) (Yotsu-Yamashita et al., 2001; Venkatesh et al., 2005). I then used a simple binomial test to compare the distribution of our data against the null expectation of a Poisson distribution. I calculated the mean and variance of the samples and then the coefficient of dispersion (CD = variance/mean). In a Poisson distribution the mean and variance are roughly equal $(CD = 1)$, while in a clumped distribution the variance should be much greater than the mean $(CD > 1)$ (Krebs, 1999). Because the CD is approximately χ^2 distributed (Krebs, 1999) I calculated χ^2 scores for our CD measures to obtain *P*-values against the random expectation (CD = 1). Here $\chi^2 = I(n - 1)$ where I is the CD and $n - 1$ is the degrees of freedom (DF), in this case the number of sites minus 1 (Krebs, 1999).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TTX-Mediated Snake-Amphibian Coevolution

The neurotoxin TTX is ecologically and taxonomically widespread in marine environments, yet in terrestrial ecosystems the poison occurs only in amphibians (Daly, 2004). Here, TTX is found across diverse amphibian lineages, from ambystomatid salamanders (Yotsu et al., 1990) to dendrobatid and brachycephalid frogs (Daly et al., 1994; Pires et al., 2005). As one of the most lethal, naturally occurring toxins known (Medinsky and Klaassen, 1996), TTX is a powerful chemical weapon in the amphibian defensive arsenal. Nevertheless, a single group of predators has repeatedly overcome this chemical defense; snakes are the only group of vertebrates known to consume TTX laden prey (Brodie et al., 2002). Here I identify the major cases of TTX-mediated coevolution between snakes and amphibians, and suggest these interactions are widespread but have received little attention.

In western North America, coevolutionary interactions are well established between Pacific newts (*Taricha*) and three garter snake species (*Thamnophis*): *T. sirtalis* take *T. granulosa* (Brodie, 1968) and show varying levels of physiological resistance to TTX (Brodie et al., 2002); *T*. *couchii* prey on *T*. *torosa* (Brodie et al., 2005) and *T. sierrae* (Wiseman and Pool, 2007) and are resistant to TTX at levels seen in sympatric *T*. *torosa* (Brodie et al., 2005); *T. atratus* consume *T. granulosa* (Greene and Feldman, 2008) and probably *T*. *torosa* (Fox, 1951) and possess high levels of TTX resistance (Chapter 2, 3). The landscape mosaic of match and mismatch between prey (TTX) and predator (TTX resistance) traits provides a foundation for the study of the ecological and evolutionary dynamics of newt-garter snake coevolution (Brodie and Brodie, 1999; Brodie et al., 2002; Hanifin et al., 2008). Yet parallel interactions between other sets of ecologically and phylogenetically separate snake and amphibian pairs may provide novel insights in our understanding of coevolution.

The East Asian natricine, *Rhabdophis tigrinus*, preys heavily on frogs (Mori and Moriguchi, 1988; Mori et al., 1992; Hirai, 2004) and includes the treefrog *Polypedates leucomystax* in its diet (Zhao et al., 1998). Recently, members of the rhacophorid tree frog genus *Polypedates* (cf *P. leucomystax*; P. Janzen pers. comm.) were found to possess low to high levels of TTX (30−920 Mouse Units (MU); Tanu et al., 2001). Another natricine, the Japanese *Amphiesma pryeri*, takes the newt *Cynops ensicauda* (Mori and Moriguchi, 1988; Goris and Maeda, 2004), which contains moderate to acute levels of TTX (60−7000 MU; Mosher et al., 1964; Wakely et al., 1966; Yotsu et al., 1990; MU estimates from Daly, 2004). The Eurasian genus *Natrix*, sister group to North American natricines (Alfaro and Arnold, 2001; Lawson et al., 2005), contains a few amphibian specialists known to feed on sympatric *Triturus* newts (Arnold and Ovenden, 2002). For example, some Italian populations of *N. natrix* prey heavily on *T. alpestris* and *T. carnifex* (Luiselli et al., 1997; Filippi and Luiselli, 2002), and *N. megalocephala* of the Caucuses is a predator of *T. vittatus* (Szczerbak, 2003). Levels of TTX recorded in newts of the genus *Triturus* range from negligible to moderate amounts (<1−190 MU; Mosher et al., 1964; Wakely et al., 1966; Yotsu et al., 1990; MU estimates from Daly, 2004). The Central and South American xenodontine, *Liophis epinephalus*, is a frog specialist known to take a number of highly dangers prey (Toledo et al., 2007) including several species of *Atelopus* toads (Myers et al., 1978; Greene, 1997) that possess TTX and similar alkaloids (10-100 MU; Kim et al., 1975; Daly et al., 1994; MU estimates from Daly, 2004). Several East Asian pitvipers also consume TTX bearing prey. In Japan, *Gloydius blomhoffii* takes *Cynops pyrrhogaster* and *Protobothrops flavoviridis* preys on

C. ensicauda (Mori and Moriguchi, 1988; Goris and Maeda, 2004), while Taiwanese *P. stejnegeri* is known to eat *Polypedates* (Creer et al., 2002).

Mapping TTX resistance data and diet records onto the colubroid phylogeny indicates that high sensitivity to TTX is the ancestral condition, and that TTX resistance has originated repeatedly in snakes (Fig. 4.1). Elevated TTX resistance has evolved independently at least five times within natricines and once in xenodontines. If we consider all the known prey records, then elevated TTX resistance has probably evolved twice in pitvipers and possibly once among members of *Natrix* (not mapped because I could not acquire live or genetic material). The parallel arms-races between potentially lethal prey and resistant predators has evolved independently across the globe in diverse amphibians and snakes. Unfortunately, TTX detection is difficult (Daly, 2004), and the cryptic nature of snakes leads to only rare observations of feeding in the wild (Greene, 1997). Thus, I suspect numerous coevolutionary interactions between TTX bearing amphibians and their ophidian predators await discovery.

Genetic Basis of TTX Resistance in Snakes

I examined the genetic underpinnings of TTX resistance in snakes by characterizing molecular changes in the skeletal muscle sodium channel gene $Na_v1.4$. This locus produces a channel forming protein essential in muscle function that TTX selectively blocks (Hille, 2001). A great deal of literature on the architecture of Na_v loci suggests that TTX fits into the outer pore of the channel (see Lipkind and Fozzard, 2000; Hille, 2001), and replacements at certain residues in the pore dramatically alter TTX binding affinity (Noda et al., 1989; Terlau et al., 1991; Kontis and Goldin, 1993; PérezGarcía et al., 1996; Chen et al., 1997; Penzotti et al., 1998; Yamagishi et al., 2001; Choudhary et al., 2003).

Consistent with the critical functional role of $Na_v1.4$, the amino acids of the pore forming structures (pore α-helix, selectivity filter, β-strand; Lipkind and Fozzard, 2000) are highly conserved across colubroid snakes and nearly identical to mammalian sequences (though I detected appreciable variation N-terminal to the DII and DIII α helices that may warrant further investigation). Excluding TTX resistant taxa, I found only eight mutations in the P-loops of squamates: three reversals or plesiopmorphies shared with mammals (*Enhydris* DI; *Causus* DII; Colubroidea DIV); three autapomorphies (*Charina* DI, DIV; *Elapsoidea* DII); and two variable sites in DII that may reflect phylogeny or unsorted polymorphism. None of these sites are thought to be important in TTX ligation, though it is interesting to note that non-colubroid reptiles share an E1560Q (positions follow $Na_v1.4$ CDS from *T. sirtalis* AY851746) and also display heightened sensitivity to TTX compared to colubroids (Fig. 4.1).

I found twelve derived mutations in the six species that consume TTX bearing prey, greater variation than that seen across all squamate reptiles (Fig. 4.2). Of the twelve replacements, eight occur in amino acids of the β-strand, whose side chains face the pore thus directly interact with TTX (Lipkind and Fozzard, 1994, 2000). Additionally, seven out of the twelve substitutions are confined to the same three sites, two of which involve substitutions to the same amino acid. A detailed discussion of the P-loop changes in *Thamnophis* can be found elsewhere (Geffeney et al., 2005; Chapter 2), here I briefly describe novel discoveries in the Old World natricines *A. pryeri*, *R. tigrinus*, and the New World xenodontine *L. epinephalus*.

Japanese *A. pryeri* share a single D1277E substitution in the β-strand of DIII. The replacement involves biochemically similar amino acids, and mutations at this position generally lead to only minor changes in TTX binding affinity (Terlau et al., 1991; Pérez-García et al., 1996; Choudhary et al., 2003). However, it is worth pointing out that a substitution also involving similar amino acids at a position thought to have little reactivity with TTX still produced a dramatic reduction in TTX binding affinity; the I1561V substitution seen in some *T. sirtalis* reduced the sensitivity of Na_v1.4 to TTX by 50% (Geffeney et al., 2005). Furthermore, an identical $D\rightarrow E$ substitution occurs in highly resistant *T. atratus* (Chapter 2) and in Na_v1.4b of the TTX bearing pufferfish, *Tetraodon* (Venkatesh et al., 2005), again suggesting this replacement provides some level of TTX resistance.

The *Rhabdophis tigrinus* from Korea holds an I1555M change in DIV α-helix. The substitution involves relatively similar amino acids, but the loss of a rigid alphatic side chain and gain of a larger functional group may slightly alter the orientation or conformation of the α -helix. While this position is also quite superficial, a number of putatively extracellular sites clearly interact with TTX (Kontis and Goldin, 1993; Yamagishi et al., 2001; Carbonneau et al., 2002; Choudhary et al., 2003; Geffeney et al., 2005) and I1555 is considered a TTX sensing residue (Tikhonov and Zhorov, 2005). Perhaps most telling is the fact that an identical replacement is seen in $Na_v1.4b$ of the pufferfish *Tetraodon* and *Takifugu* (Venkatesh et al., 2005).

The Neotropical *L. epinephalus* displays two flanking mutations in the β-strand of DIV. The first, a D1568S, occurs at a site known to play a major role in TTX ligation (Terlau et al., 1991; Pérez-García et al., 1996; Chen et al., 1997; Penzotti et al., 1998;

Choudhary et al., 2003; Tikhonov and Zhorov, 2005; Scheib et al., 2006). A hydrogen bond is thought to form between TTX and D1568 (Chen et al., 1997; Yotsu-Yamashita et al., 1999; Choudhary et al., 2003; Tikhonov and Zhorov, 2005; Scheib et al., 2006), so changes that neutralize the charged D1568 should dramatically reduce TTX affinity to the outer pore. Substitutions at this position in rat $Na_v1.2$ and $Na_v1.4$ require 30 to 500 times the amount of TTX to block Na⁺ current (Terlau et al., 1991; Pérez-García et al., 1996; Chen et al., 1997; Penzotti et al., 1998; Choudhary et al., 2003). Interestingly, *L. epinephalus* shares a change at D1568 with the two highly resistant garter snakes, *T. atratus* and *T. sirtalis*, though to a different amino acid (Geffeney et al., 2005; Chapter 2). The second P-loop change seen in *L. epinephalus* is a G1569D substitution. Similar replacements occur in TTX resistant *T. sirtalis* (Geffeney et al., 2005) and Na_v1.4a of pufferfish (Venkatesh et al., 2005; Maruta et al., 2008). Functional expression in rat $Na_v1.2$ of one of the naturally occurring pufferfish replacements required a 2 to 3-fold increase in TTX to block $Na⁺$ current (Maruta et al., 2008). Given current understanding of the docking orientation of TTX (Choudhary et al., 2003; Tikhonov and Zhorov, 2005; Scheib et al., 2006), drastic changes at G1569 should alter the positioning or fit of TTX into the outer pore and may further weaken the affinity of TTX to the neighboring N1568 residue (Maruta et al., 2008). In *L. epinephalus*, the G1569D substitution involves dramatically different amino acids and likely changes the conformation of the external mouth of the outer pore and possibly pore volume because D is large, charged and hydrophobic, whereas G is tiny, uncharged and hydrophilic.

Finally, it is interesting to note that I did not detect adaptive variation in *Natrix*. However, some species of *Natrix* show extensive geographic variation in diet (Arnold

and Ovenden, 2002; Luiselli et al., 2005) and predation on newts seems to be a restricted local phenomenon (Luiselli et al., 2005). Furthermore, most newts of the genus *Triturus* possess only low to only trace amounts of TTX (Mosher et al., 1964; Wakely et al., 1966; Yotsu et al., 1990; Daly, 2004). Thus it is uncertain whether my samples of *N. maura* and *N. natrix* represent newt feeding populations, and to what degree physiological resistance is required to consume European newts.

Constraints on Convergent Evolution

At first glance natural selection may appear to play the dominant role driving phenotypic convergence across independent lineages. However, such convergence might also bespeak biases inherent in the evolution of the traits under selection. There may be few available responses to selection because of potential biophysical or biochemical constraints on the traits under selection (Wake, 1991; DePristo et al., 2005; Miller et al., 2006; Weinreich et al., 2006) and commonalities in the genetic architecture underlying the phenotype (i.e., genetic channeling; Schluter, 1996), all of which might produce similarities in the adaptive landscape and bias trait evolution (Arnold, 1992; Arnold et al., 2001). Thus, both natural selection and evolutionary constraints are likely involved in convergent evolution (Wake, 1991; Schluter et al., 2004; Brakefield, 2007).

Despite the intuitive relevance of constraints, their role in evolution remains contentious because few have convincingly demonstrated a constraint working with or against natural selection to bias character evolution (Pigliucci and Kaplan, 2000; Brakefield and Roskam, 2006; Brakefield, 2007; e.g., Miller et al., 2006; Weinreich et al., 2006). One roadblock is that addressing the role of constraints ideally requires

knowledge of the genetic and epigenetic causes of traits and how those traits relate to fitness, as well as information on the potential sources of constraints to adequately describe trait space and fitness landscapes (Arnold, 1992; Pigliucci and Kaplan, 2000; Brakefield and Roskam, 2006; Miller et al., 2006; Brakefield, 2007). In snake-amphibian coevolution, the ecological players are long-lived and often cryptic taxa, so collecting population level fitness data to describe the adaptive landscape of TTX resistance may not be feasible. Nonetheless, TTX resistance is clearly adaptive (Motychak et al., 1999; Brodie et al., 2002; Chapter 2) and the trait appears to have a simple genetic basis (Geffeney et al., 2005; Chapter 3), so the evolution of TTX resistance may offer a tractable system for the study of constraints. Furthermore, a great deal of research on the molecular biology and neuro-physiology of the sodium channel provides us with a good picture of the adaptive topology of Na_v loci despite the absence of quantitative genetic data.

The molecular architecture of the outer pore of $Na_v1.4$ is strikingly conserved across snakes and mammals, suggesting intense stabilizing selection to preserve this design. Indeed, amino acid substitutions in the P-loops that alter TTX binding affinity to sodium channels also tend to either reduce Na⁺ permeability ($r^2 = 0.417$, $P < 0.0001$), Na⁺ selectivity, or both $(r^2 = 0.497, P < 0.0001)$, due to the neutralization of negative charges that line the outer pore and changes in pore volume or aperture (Noda et al., 1989; Terlau et al., 1991; Backx et al., 1992; Chiamvimonvat et al., 1996; Chen et al., 1997; Sun et al., 1997; Yamagishi et al., 2001). The tradeoff between TTX sensitivity and sodium channel performance is readily apparent at the molecular level (Fig. 4.3), suggesting strong antagonistic pleiotropy within $Na_v1.4$. Such intramolecular pleiotropy should limit
selection to only those mutational options that both preserve pore structure (muscle function) and also defend against TTX.

If there are severe biophysical constraints on $Na_v1.4$, then the fitness landscape of this locus may have just a few peaks and natural selection will repeatedly move independent species up those paths. Thus, the repeated occurrence of adaptive mutations at the same few beneficial sites in $Na_v1.4$ would provide the genetic signature of constrained evolution. A noticeable departure from the null expectation of a Poisson distribution of mutations (random events) is observed whether I liberally considered all P-loop sites available for substitution (CD = 3.5626, χ^2 = 338.4483, *P* < 0.0001) or conservatively just those sites verified to reduce TTX (CD = 1.5973, χ^2 = 54.3077, *P* = 0.015). Instead, P-loop substitutions are underdispersed, and in TTX resistant taxa the majority of replacements (seven out of twelve) are confined to the same three sites in DIII and DIV, two of which involve substitutions to the same amino acid. The striking coincidence of replacements between resistant snakes and pufferfish (Yotsu-Yamashita et al., 2000; Venkatesh et al., 2005; Soong and Venkatesh, 2006) further strengthens the notion that the genetic response of snakes (and perhaps all TTX resistant vertebrates) has been restricted.

Phenotypic convergence may well be the hallmark of adaptive evolution, yet the primacy of natural selection should not be accepted without scrutiny (Gould and Lewontin, 1979; Pigliucci and Kaplan, 2000; Brakefield, 2007). Understanding biases in the generation and accessibility of variation are critical to resolving how evolutionary constraints work with or against natural selection to produce repeated patterns. Underlying similarities in codon bias, genetic variance (G_{max}) , genome structure, and

other similarities due to common descent may bias the amount and pattern of variation available to natural selection (Arnold, 1992; Schluter, 1996; Schluter et al., 2004). The ability of natural selection to act on that variation may be further restricted through biophysical, biochemical, developmental, or pleiotropic constraints, predisposing some outcomes over others (Maynard Smith et al., 1985; Wake, 1991; Miller et al., 2006; Weinreich et al., 2006). In the snake-amphibian coevolution examined here, convergent molecular evolution appears to underlie the phenotypic convergence. Similar selective pressures, simple genetic controls for the traits under selection, and narrow fitness landscapes due to pleiotropy from the biophysical constraints on Na_v loci may all have conspired to push adaptive evolution along parallel paths of least resistance. Hence, a number of factors probably impose limits on adaptive evolution in these snakes, and there may be a ceiling to escalating arms-races between snake predators and amphibian prey (but see Hanifin et al., 2008). The extent to which the traits behind evolutionary convergence are constrained remains to be seen, but it may be that natural selection is often tightly bound, leading diverse evolutionary lineages along predestined genetic and phenotypic responses (e.g., Cresko et al., 2004; Prud' homme et al., 2006; Segré et al., 2006; Zhang, 2006; Tishkoff et al., 2007).

FIGURE 4.1. Phylogenetic distribution of snakes that prey on TTX bearing amphibians and also posses adaptive variation in Na_v1.4. *(Continued)*

FIGURE 4.1. *(Continued)* Phylogeny of colubroid snakes and relatives based on relationships presented by Cadle (1984a, 1984b, 1994), Vidal et al. (2000), Alfaro and Arnold (2001), de Queiroz et al. (2002), Parkinson et al. (2002), Pinou et al. (2004), Lawson et al. (2005), Burbrink and Lawson (2007), Jiang et al. (2007), Mulcahy (2007), and Wiens et al. (2008). Snakes that prey on TTX laden frogs or salamanders (colored taxa and branches) show derived variation in the P-loops of DIII and DIV (colored circles), while P-loops in other domains (and other taxa) lack adaptive variation (black circles). In a few cases I were unable to obtain P-loop sequences (white circles) or generated incomplete P-loop sequences (grey circles). Numbers of individuals sequenced (GE) and assayed for TTX resistance (PE) alongside measures of TTX resistance (50% MAMU). Direct measures of whole animal resistance to TTX come from Brodie (1968), Motychak et al. (1999), Brodie et al. (2005), Chapter 2, and this study. Elevated levels of TTX resistance are inferred for three taxa based on the measures of TTX recorded in prey items: (a) prey *Cynops ensicauda* possess 60−7000 Mouse Units (MU) of TTX (Mosher et al., 1964; Wakely et al., 1966; Yotsu et al., 1990; MU estimates from Daly, 2004); (b) prey *Polypedates* sp. possess 30−920 MU of TTX (Tanu et al., 2001); (c) prey *Atelopus* sp. possess 10-100 MU of TTX (Kim et al., 1975; Daly et al., 1994; MU estimate from Daly, 2004).

FIGURE 4.2. Ecological and molecular convergence in TTX resistant snakes from across the globe. *(Continued)*

FIGURE 4.2. *(Continued)* In parts of North America, *Thamnophis sirtalis* (red), *T. atratus* (light blue), and *T. couchii* (green) prey on *Taricha* newts (e.g., Brodie et al., 2002, 2005; Chapter 2); Central American *Liophis epinephalus* consume several *Atelopus* toads (Myers et al., 1978; Greene, 1997); Asian *Rhabdophis tigrinus* prey on the treefrog *Polypedates leucomystax* (Zhao et al., 1998); Japanese *Amphiesma pryeri* take the newt *Cynops ensicauda* (Mori and Moriguchi, 1988; Goris and Maeda, 2004). Structure of the αsubunit of $Na_v1.4$ showing the four domains (DI-DIV), their six transmembrane segments (S1-S6), and the linkers that connect segments (Hille, 2001). The four polypeptide chains that link S5 to S6 (bold) form the outer pore of the channel by folding back into the membrane to create a funnel at the base of which lies a narrow selectivity filter (Lipkind and Fozzard, 1994, 2000; Hille, 2001) that preferentially conducts Na+ ions. A number of residues that form the external mouth, lining, and selectivity filter of the pore bind strongly to TTX (Noda et al., 1989; Terlau et al., 1991; Kontis and Goldin, 1993; Pérez-García et al., 1996; Chen et al., 1997; Penzotti et al., 1998; Yamagishi et al., 2001; Choudhary et al., 2003), which occludes the pore and halts Na⁺movement (Hille, 2001). Though a number of residues in each P-loop are known to be important in TTX ligation, all the adaptive variation in snakes is clustered in DIII and DIV, and often at the same site. Coincident substitutions occur in one or both of the two copies of $\text{Na}_v1.4$ in TTX bearing pufferfish and generally involve identical replacements (Yotsu-Yamashita et al., 2000; Venkatesh et al., 2005; Soong and Venkatesh, 2006). Human sequence given for comparison (M81758), but positions follow Nav1.4 CDS from *T. sirtalis* AY851746; structures of the pore labeled below human sequence (\star , selectivity filter; α , α -helix; β , β -strand). Geographic distributions follow Campden-Main (1970), Dixon (1980, 1989), Zhao and Adler (1993), Stebbins (2003), Szczerbak (2003), Ota and Iwanaga (1997); *A.pryeri* is actually confined to the Ryukyu archipelago (Ota and Iwanaga, 1997) but is shown here across all of Japan for ease of illustration.

FIGURE 4.3. Regression of inhibitory concentrations of TTX against single channel Na⁺ conductance. Relationship between the amount of TTX (nM) required to inhibit peak Na⁺ current by 50% (IC₅₀) against single channel conductance (pS) in wild type (triangles) and single site Na_v mutants (circles); simple regression on all data (b1: r^2 = 0.417, $P < 0.0001$) and with a mutant critical to ion selectivity removed (b2: $r^2 = 0.497$, P < 0.0001) (see text for details); data from Terlau et al. (1991), Backx et al. (1992) and Yamagishi et al. (2001). The tradeoff between TTX sensitivity and sodium channel performance is readily apparent at the molecular level where mutations that significantly improve TTX resistance generally reduce Na⁺ permeability (and often selectivity). Thus, intramolecular pleiotropy may have restricted the independent evolution of TTX resistance in snakes.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY

One of the chief aims of evolutionary biology is to understand the genetics of adaptive evolution (Futuyma, 1998; Feder, 2007; Ellegren and Sheldon, 2008). We can certainly measure the origins, evolution, and persistence of consequential mutations in controlled laboratory settings, and place these data into a well-developed framework of adaptive evolution (Orr, 2005a, 2005b; Phillips, 2005; e.g., Wichman et al., 1999; Rokyta et al., 2005; Miller et al., 2006; Weinreich et al., 2006). Yet our ability to document and explain the effects of analogous genetic changes on the rate and direction of phenotypic evolution in real communities is only now emerging (Feder and Mitchell-Olds, 2003; Ellegren and Sheldon, 2008; Stinchcombe and Hoekstra, 2008; e.g., Gompel et al., 2005; Hoekstra et al., 2006; Joron et al., 2006; Storz et al., 2007).

The coevolutionary interactions between newts (*Taricha*) that possess the potent neurotoxin, tetrodotoxin, (TTX) and their resistant garter snake (*Thamnophis*) predators, forms an ideal setting for studying adaptation because of the well-defined ecological context and selection pressures (Brodie, 1968; Brodie and Brodie 1999; Hanafin et al., 2008), and the partially defined genetic basis of the predatory adaptation (Geffeney et al., 2002, 2005). Here, I focus on patterns of phenotypic and genetic variation in natural populations of garter snakes (and relatives) as a model for the study of adaptive evolution.

A fundamental question surrounding adaptive evolution is to understand the roles that novel mutations, standing genetic variation, and introgression play in the adaptive

process (Orr and Betancourt, 2001; Hermisson and Pennings, 2005; Barrett and Schluter, 2008). I focus on parallel adaptations seen in three species of *Thamnophis* (*T. sirtalis*, *T. couchii*, and *T. atratus*) that experience common patterns of reciprocal selection to determine whether adaptation has evolved through novel mutations, recruitment of standing adaptive variation, or introgression of beneficial alleles (Chapter 2). I describe the genetic basis and evolutionary history of elevated TTX resistance in *Thamnophis* and show that TTX resistance has evolved independently through amino acid changes at critical sites in a voltage-gated sodium channel protein $(N_{\alpha_1}1.4)$ that is the specific target of the TTX. These results demonstrate that adaptive evolution has occurred multiple times in garter snakes via the *de novo* acquisition of beneficial mutations.

Determining the underlying genetic architecture of adaptations is essential in underatnding the tempo and mode of phenotypic evolution and patterns of coevolution (Falconer and MacKay, 1995; Kopp and Gavrilets, 2006). I evaluate the contribution of Nav1.4 alleles to TTX resistance in *T. atratus* and *T. sirtalis* populations along the coast of central California (Chapter 3). Allelic variation in $Na_x1.4$ explains 29% and 98% of the variation in TTX resistance in *T. atratus* and *T. sirtalis*, respectively, demonstrating that $Na_v1.4$ is a major effect locus. The simple genetic architecture of TTX resistance in garter snakes may significantly impact the dynamics of trait change and coevolution.

Patterns of convergent evolution are cited as some of the most compelling examples of the strength of natural selection in shaping organismal diversity. Yet repeated patterns may tell us as much about the constraints that restrict evolution as about the importance of natural selection. I describe convergent molecular adaptations in parallel ecological arms-races between diverse snakes and amphibians from across the

globe (Chapter 4). Six snake species from three separate clades have independently acquired amino acid changes in $Na_v1.4$, the target of the TTX contained in their amphibian prey. The derived mutations are clustered in two portions of the gene and most of the replacements (seven out of twelve) are confined to the same three sites, two of which involve substitutions to the same amino acid. While a number of amino acid changes are known to make $Na_v1.4$ insensitive to TTX and might be favored by selection in some environments, most of these substitutions negatively impact or even abolish the ion-conducting function of the protein. Indeed, a functional tradeoff between channel function and TTX resistance is evident in data taken from the literature (Terlau et al., 1991; Backx et al., 1992; Yamagishi et al., 2001). Thus, intramolecular pleiotropy appears to have restricted the variation accessible to natural selection and lead to a relatively narrow genetic response across TTX resistant taxa. Natural selection appears to have been bounded, repeatedly moving independent snake species up the same few adaptive peaks.

Finally, it is worth noting that I have only identified an intriguing correlation between the physiological ability of several snake species to consume deadly prey and derived genetic changes in those snakes at a candidate locus affected by the prey toxin. The case is strong: several prey species share high levels of the neurotoxin TTX (selective agent) which binds selectively to the pore of the $Na_v1.4$ protein (target of selection) involved in muscle activity and coordination; only predators known to eat the prey possess derived allelic variation in $Na_v1.4$ at sites critical to TTX ligation. Future work should directly link organismal performance (or feeding ability) to the allelic variation at $Na_v1.4$ through functional expression of the derived alleles in heterologous

cells and subsequent measures of TTX binding affinity to the protein. Future efforts should also seek to uncover adaptive variation across all TTX sensitive Na_v members (peripheral and central nerve sodium channels) in TTX resistant snakes. It seems likely that all TTX sensitive Na_v paralogs have changed in concert with $Na_v1.4$ to produce the final TTX resistant phenotype. Establishing the number and expression patterns of all the Na_v members in snakes will be a first step towards understanding adaptation in an entire gene family in what is emerging as a model system for the study of adaptive evolution.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Specimens examined

TABLE A.1. List of specimens examined for TTX bioassay (PE) and Na_v1.4 sequence variation (GE). General locality, laboratory run number for phenotypic assay, and voucher number also provided. Specimens without voucher numbers are captive snakes still maintained in the USU live collection; CAS: California Academy of Sciences; LSUMZ: Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science; MVZ: Museum of Vertebrate Zoology; SDSNH: San Diego Natural History Museum; UMMZ: University of Michigan Museum of Zoology; UTACV: University of Texas, Arlington; ZVC: Departmento de Zoologia Vertebrados, Facultad de Ciencias, Universidad de la República Uruguay; AdQ: A. de Queiroz; CRF: C.R. Feldman (deposited at CAS); EDB jr: E.D. Brodie jr (deposited at CAS or UTACV); SJA ts: S.J. Arnold (tissue collection).

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APPENDIX B

Primers used to amplify and sequence $Na_v1.4$

Primer	Sequence $(5^{\prime}-3^{\prime})$	Position ^a
5'UTR.F Nav1.4	GTTTTCCCAGTCACGACGTT	5' UTR
$SN46$ 1f ^b	GGGATATTGCTCATACCGTCA	5' UTR
e1.Fa Nav1.4	GGGATATTGCTCATACCGTCA	10
$e3.F$ Nav1.4	AGCCAACTGTGTCTTCATGACT	420
$e4.F$ Nav 1.4	AAGGTACTTGCTCGGGGATT	517
$e4.R$ Nav 1.4	ACATTCCTGCGAGATCCTTG	553
e 5.Ra Nav 1.4	CGTAGACTTGGGCAACGTCT	621
$e5.F$ Nav1.4	GGGCAACGTCTCTGCTCTAC	630
$e5.R$ Nav 1.4	ACATTCCGTGTTCTTCGAGC	652
$e6.F$ Nav1.4	TCTGTGAAGAAGCTCGCTGA	730
$e6$.Ra Nav 1.4	ACTGGGACCTTTGACTGGC	804
$e6.R$ Nav1.4	ACTGTTCATGGGGAACTTGC	967
e8.F-PH Nav1.4	GTGTCCAGAAGGATTTCTCTGC	1074
$e8.F$ Nav1.4	CGAAACCCAAATTACGGCTA	1108
DI.S6.1270.R	GGCTCTTTCTATCTCATCAATTTAATCCTGGC	1270
e9.R-PH Nav1.4	TTTAATCCTGGCTGTGGTGG	1290
e9.R Nav1.4	GCAGAACAGAATGATGCCAC	1321
e11.Fa Nav1.4	TGTTGTCCAGTTTGGGTGAA	1789
$e11.F$ Nav 1.4	GTCCTGGACCCTTTTGTTGA	1834
e11.R Nav1.4	TGAATGTGGGCAATCTGGTA	1940
$e12.F$ Nav 1.4	TTCACAGCTGAGATGGTGCT	1972
e12.R Nav1.4	GGATGGAACATCTTTGACAGC	2032
$e13.F-PH Nav1.4$	GCATGCAGCTATTTGGGAAG	2264
e13.R-PH Nav1.4	CCCGATGACCATGACCATTA	2459
e14.R Nav1.4	TTAGCTCCTTCAGTGCCGAT	2516
e14.F Nav1.4	AGCTCCTTCAGTGCCGATAG	2518
e14.Ra Nav1.4	CACAGGCCAGGATTTCAAGT	2748
DIII.S5.3584.F	TCTTCTGGCTCATCTTCAGCATTATGGG	3584
e19.F-PH Nav1.4	CGCTGTGTCAATACCACCAC	3640
$e19.Fa-PH$ Nav1.4	TGAAAATGCCACTGATGTCC	3723
i19.R-PH Nav1.4	GCACATCCAGATCAACATGC	intron 19
i19.F-PH Nav1.4	GGGGTTTTCAAAAAGCACTTC	intron 19
$e21.R-PH$ Nav 1.4	TATTGAGGCTGTTCCTCCTG	3862
DIII.S6.3913.R	GTGAAGAATGACCCAAAGATAATAAAGATGAC	3913
$e24.F-PH$ Nav1.4	CCGAACTCTGCTCTTTGCTT	4491
DIV.S5.4559.F	TGGTTATGTTCATTTATTCCATTTTTGG	4559
e24.R-PH Nav1.4	ATCTGGACAACCCTGGCAGT	4754
DIV.S6.4882.R	GAGAATTTTAATGTAGCCACAGAGGAGAG	4882
e24.Fb Nav1.4	GGAGAAATTTATGGCTGCAA	5193
3'UTR.R Nav1.4	GTTGGTGTATGGTTCCAAATGA	3' UTR

TABLE B.1. Oligonucleotide primers used to amplify and sequence genomic DNA and messenger RNA (cDNA) in *Thamnophis* and other squamate reptiles.

a positions follow Nav1.4 CDS from *T. sirtalis* AY851746. b from Geffeney et al (2005); all other primers designed herein. APPENDIX C

Exon/intron structure of *Thamnophis* Na_v1.4

FIGURE C.1. Map of *Thamnophis* Na_v1.4 intron/exon structure emphasizing pore regions. The predicted exon/intron structure of *Thamnophis* Na_v1.4 is based on comparison to *Homo* (M81758) and *Rattus* (M26643). The 24 exons (large boxes) are drawn roughly to scale while untranslated regions (small boxes) are not; the four P-loops (red boxes) and primers used to capture these regions detailed above the locus; domain boundaries follow Trimmer et al. (1989) and George et al. (1993). I translated *Thamnophis* and mammal Na_v1.4 CDS in MacClade (Maddison and Maddison, 2005), aligned these with ClustalW (Thompson et al., 1994) and forced nucleotide sequences to follow resultant amino acid alignment in tranalign (Williams, 2002). I then created an exon/intron map of mammal reference sequences using GMAP 2 (Wu and Wanatabe, 2005). The introns sequenced herein (introns 8, 19, 20) match the assumed splicing sites exactly.

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Education:

Ph.D. Biology. Utah State University, 2002-2008. Dissertation-"Evolutionary genetics of tetrodotoxin (TTX) resistance in snakes: tracking a feeding adaptation from populations through clades"

M.A. Ecology and Systematic Biology. San Francisco State University, 1997-2000. Thesis-"Comparative phylogeography of three Californian reptiles: *Contia tenuis*, *Diadophis punctatus*, *Elgaria multicarinata*"

B.A. Integrative Biology. University of California, Berkeley, 1992-1996. Minor Entomology. Minor Forestry & Resource Management.

Peer Review Publications:

- Hoyer, R.F. & **C.R. Feldman**. *In Review*. A new species of snake from California and Oregon in the genus *Contia* (Squamata: Colubridae). Copeia.
- Angielczyk, K.D., **Feldman, C.R.** & G. Miller. *In Review.* Geometric morphometric analysis of plastron shape in emydine turtles: the effects of phylogeny, habitat and function. Biological Journal of the Linnean Society.
- Fontanella, F., **Feldman, C.R.** Siddall, M.E. & F.T. Burbrink. 2008*.* Phylogeography of *Diadophis punctatus*: extensive lineage diversity and repeated patterns of historical demography in a trans-continental snake. Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution 46: 1049–1070.
- McGaugh, S., Alacs, E.A., Edwards, S.V., **Feldman, C.R.**, Georges, A., Sites, J.W., jr., & N. Valenzuela. 2007. From molecules to organisms: research applications of modern genetic tools for turtle biology and conservation *in* Defining turtle diversity: proceedings of a workshop on genetics, ethics, and taxonomy of tortoises and freshwater turtles. Shaffer, H.B., FitzSimmons, N.N., Georges, A., & A.G.J. Rhodin, eds. Chelonian Research Monographs 4: 47-72.
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- **Feldman, C.R.** & J.A. Wilkinson. 2000. *Rana muscosa*. Predation. Herpetological Review 31: 102.
- **Feldman, C.R.** & J.A. Wilkinson. 2000. *Thamnophis sirtalis*. Diet. Herpetological Review 31: 248.

Presentations:

- Is there more than one way to skin a newt? Parallel evolution in the newt-garter snake coevolutionary system. (talk) Annual Biology Department retreat, Utah State University, Aug. 2006.
- Is there more than one way to skin a newt? Parallel evolution in the newt-garter snake

coevolutionary system. (talk) Annual joint Ichthyologist and Herpetologist meetings, Jul. 2006.

- Phylogenetics of emydine turtles revisited. (invited talk) Western Pond Turtle Conference, Apr. 2005.
- Comparative phylogeography of woodland reptiles in California. (poster) Annual Idaho NIH-BRIN Universities meetings, Jul. 2004.
- Comparative phylogeography of three California Reptiles. (talk) Intermountain Herpetological Rendezvous, Nov. 2003.
- Comparative phylogeography of three California Reptiles. (poster) Annual Society for the Study Evolution meetings, Jun. 2003.
- Comparative phylogeography of three California reptiles. (poster) Annual International Society of Biogeographers meetings, Jan. 2003
- New Chinese turtles: Endangered or invalid? (invited talk) Cornell Herpetology Society, Nov. 2001.
- Molecular systematics of emydine turtles. (talk) Annual joint Ichthyologist and Herpetologist meetings, Jun. 2000. Comparative phylogeography of three squamate reptiles in California: *Contia tenuis*,
- *Diadophis punctatus*, and *Elgaria multicarinata*. (talk) Annual joint Ichthyologist and Herpetologist meetings, Jun. 1999.
- Evolution and natural history of snakes. (invited talk) San Francisco Naturalist Society, Apr. 1999.

Grants & Awards:

Robbins Award-Graduate Assistant Researcher of the Year, Utah State University, 2006. School of Graduate Studies Dissertation Fellowship, Utah State University, 2006.

Graduate Student Senate Travel Fund, Utah State University, 2006.

Society for the Study of Amphibians Student Travel Award, 2006. College of Science Graduate Student Researcher of the Year, Utah State University, 2006.

Dept. of Biology Graduate Student Researcher of the Year, Utah State University, 2006. Charles Stearns Grant-in-Aid of Herpetological Research, California Academy of

Sciences, 2000.

Henri Seibert Award-outstanding talk, Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, 2000.

Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need Fellowship, U.S. Dept. of Education, 2000.

Henri Seibert Award-outstanding talk (honorable mention), Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, 1999.

Grants-in-Aid of Research, Sigma Xi, 1998.

Linnaeus Fund, Chelonian Research Foundation, 1997.

Journal Articles & Book Chapters Reviewed:

Asiatic Herpetological Research Bulletin of the Southern California Academy of Sciences* Conservation Genetics Copeia* Functional Ecology Herpetologica* Journal of Biogeography* Molecular Ecology Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* Systematic Biology

Zoologica Scripta* Biology of the Vipers (book)* The Natural History of the UC Santa Cruz Campus (book) *Multiple reviews

Societies:

American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2004-2007. Society of Systematic Biologists, 2003-present. American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, 2000-present. Herpetologist's League, 2000-2006. Chelonian Research Foundation, 1999-present. San Francisco Naturalist Society, 1998-present. Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, 1997-present.

Service & Committees:

Student committee member, Evolution faculty search, Utah State University, 2005. Invited participant, Genetics, Ethics, and Systematics: A Workshop for Turtles (NSF

funded workshop), Harvard University, 2005.

- Student committee member, Graduate Student Policy Committee, Utah State University, 2004-2005.
- Vice President, Biology Graduate Student Association, Utah State University, 2004- 2005.

Treasurer, Biology Graduate Student Association, Utah State University, 2004-2005

Secretary, Biology Graduate Student Association, Utah State University, 2003-2004 Organizing committee member, Intermountain Herpetological Rendezvous (regional

conference), Utah State University, 2003.

Student representative, Ecology faculty search, San Francisco State University, 1998- 1999.

Professional Experience:

Teaching Experience:

Teaching Assistant, Aug. 2002 – June 2006. Utah State University, Logan, UT Courses:

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- Evolution (Biol. 5250)* Herpetology (Biol. 5570)* Introductory Biology (Biol. 1210)
- Contact: Dr. Mike Pfrender (USU)
- *Also conducted class lectures

Teaching Assistant, Jan. 1998 – June 1999. San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA

- Courses:
• Introductory Biology (Biol. 240)*
- Reptiles and Amphibians of the Sierra Nevada—one week summer course I designed and conducted for elementary students at SFSU Sierra Nevada Field Campus

Contact: Dr. Robert Patterson (SFSU)

*Also conducted class lectures

Laboratory Experience:

Research Assistant, Jan. 2003 – Dec. 2003; Jan. 2007 – May 2008. Utah State University, Logan, UT Contact: Dr. Mike Pfrender (USU)

Research Associate & Laboratory Manager, Feb. 2001 – May 2002. University of Maryland Baltimore County, Baltimore, MD Contact: Dr. Kevin Omland (UMBC)

Museum Experience:

Field Associate, Feb. ¹⁹⁹⁹ – present. California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, CA Contact: Jens Vindum (CAS)

Curatorial Assistant, Jan. 1997 – June 1997. Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, CA Contact: Dr. James Patton (UCB)

Field Work:

2003-present. California, Oregon, Idaho: focused reptile collecting (PhD research) 1999-2002. California: reptile and amphibian inventory. Contact: Jens Vindum (CAS) 1997-present. California: focused small mammal collecting. Contact Dr. Marjorie Matocq (UNR)

1997-1999. California: focused reptile collecting (Master's research)

1996. California: marten and fisher habitat assessment. Contact: Dr. William Zielinski (CSUH)

1995. California: lizard population demography. Contact: Dr. Kelly Zamudio (Cornell)

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