The Status of *Lithobates palmipes* (Spix) in Trinidad and Tobago

Graham White and Saiyaad Ali

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*Lithobates palmipes* (Spix), previously named *Rana palmipes*, has generally been considered one of the rarer frogs of Trinidad. Comparatively few specimens have been collected (Kenny 1969; Murphy 1997), and it’s distribution is limited to the Central Range and southeast Trinidad. There is one locality record (questioned by Murphy 1997) from Arima Valley.

On 10 July, 2007, one of us (GW) came across a shallow pool at the edge of the forest along Edward’s Trace, Grid Reference UTM 0700667E, 1118645N. The pool was about 10 m across with a maximum depth of approximately 40 cm. Entering the pool resulted in splashing sounds and movements of the plants at the edge of the pool. At first it was assumed that there were Paradoxal frogs *Pseudis paradoxa*, possibly 10-20 individuals in the pool. When one frog was seen however it looked like a Ranid, so a field
description was taken. The frog was about 8 cm nose to
tail, with a distinct dorso-lateral fold from the nose along
the edge of the back. The fold was dark brown below, and
buff above. A pale bar across top of iris was continuous
with the dorso-lateral fold. The dorsum was green, with the
lower back, flanks and legs brownish grey with transverse
bars. There were three black spikes along mid-back and
a pale ‘malar’ streak on the head.

The frog was identified as Lithobates palmaripes from
the photograph in Murphy (1997) as the distinguishing
features noted by Murphy in the text refer to preserved
specimens and not from a live individual. Pseudis para-
doxa lacks a dorso-lateral fold and does not show the iris
pattern observed. Of the Leptodactylids, L. bolivianus
has a similar fold but is darker and lacks the green dorsum
and the iris pattern.

Lithobates palmaripes was previously placed in the
genus Rana, but renamed following Frost et al. (2006)
(not seen but cited in Murphy 2008). While this species
has been previously known from the locality, there have
been no recent published sightings and congregations
of this nature have not been recorded in Trinidad.

The presence of the frogs has been confirmed by one
of us (S. A.) who has conducted extensive field work in
southern Trinidad and found L. palmaripes in such habitats
from just west of Chatham, throughout the Victoria Mayaro
Reserve to within 4 km of Mayaro. Contrary to expecta-
tions, the frog is not uncommon with 151 records from 33
site visits. An individual photographed by S. Ali is shown
on the front cover of this issue of Living World.

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Graham White1 and Saiyaad Ali2
1. g.whitett@gmail.com
2. saiyaad-ali@hotmail.com