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A First Record of the Gecko *Gonatodes ceciliae* for the Island of Gaspar Grande, Trinidad and Tobago

Gonatodes ceciliae is a small diurnal gecko with a range limited to Trinidad and the Paria Peninsula of Venezuela. Adult males are about 51 mm in snout to vent length (SVL), with a tail 1.8 times the SVL. They are quite colourful possessing a red-brown dorsum often interspersed with yellow spots and streaks outlined in black on the head, with a yellow collar outlined in black anterior to the forelimbs. Females are somewhat smaller and have a less colourful mottled appearance (Murphy 1997). The gecko is typically associated with humid rain forest habitats.

Early on the afternoon of 29 July, 2006 while exploring the mouth of a limestone sinkhole near the path to the World War II guns at Point Baleen, Gaspar Grande Island, the author located and captured a male *Gonatodes ceciliae* in a small nook in the cave wall a few metres from the lip of the sinkhole. The animal was placed in a plastic receptacle and brought to the surface for photography. The species is known to be easily heat stressed (Murphy 1997) and as such was kept out of direct sunlight and when handled, it was grasped by its thigh to minimize heat transfer from the author's hand (Lum Young *et al.* 2005). The animal was then returned to the point of capture and released unharmed.

After a careful review of the herpetological literature of the small Boca Islands off Trinidad's northwestern peninsula and conversations with those most familiar with the herpetofauna of the area, this observation of *Gonatodes ceciliae* was confirmed as the first record of the species for the island of Gaspar Grande. Gaspar Grande is a very dry island of scrub vegetation and is not at all typical of the type of humid rain forest habitat associated with this

species. The lizard has been recorded in fairly moist areas supported by small seasonal streams on two of the other Boca Islands (Monos and Chacachacare) (Boos 1984a).

The sinkhole terminated several metres underground in a saltwater pool assumed to be fed by some underground passage from the sea. The sheltered nature of the mouth of the sinkhole may serve to some extent to trap water vapour evaporating from the saltwater pool below. A relatively cool and humid microhabitat at the mouth of the sinkhole is thus maintained allowing *Gonatodes ceciliae* to inhabit the otherwise quite warm, dry island. Gaspar Grande is in large part, a limestone island riddled with such sinkholes to saltwater pools. These sinkholes on Gaspar Grande and the small seasonally stream-fed areas on Monos and Chacachacare are microhabitat oases for a number of reptile species (Boos 1984a, b) and are worthy of continued exploration and study. It is crucial that those responsible for the management of the land in the Boca Islands seek to regulate human activity in these areas so as to preserve the species so dependent upon them for survival.

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