

Additional Notes on the Fauna Recorded for the Off-shore Islands North-West of Trinidad

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Introduction

A list of the terrestrial reptiles recorded and collected from the small islands off the north-west peninsula of Trinidad was published by Boos (1983). Additions were noted by Boos (1989). In the latter publication, mention was made of records of mammals and amphibians for Monos Island.

Since the publication of the above, both authors have made additional trips to the islands, and Quesnel, has also uncovered field notes made several years ago. As a result, several additional species can now be listed, and information documented about these unique islands.

Chacachacare Island

In 1962 Underwood reported the collection of *Hemidactylus brooki* (= *palaichthus*) from the La Tinta Bay area. No specimens were collected or seen in the intervening years until a juvenile was caught by Boos on 22nd August, 1992 under some loose plyboard on the veranda of the abandoned dormitory building chronologically used by the nuns, nurses, and coast guard personnel. Photographed and preserved, the specimen of *Hemidactylus palaichthus* was lodged in the Museum of Comparative Zoology in Harvard Massachusetts for comparison with the specimens collected on Monos Island in 1977, 1979 and 1980. This identity has been confirmed by the MCZ and it has been registered as MCZ-R-177138.

Also seen on Chacachacare Island were:

Thecadactylus rapicauda

Cnemidophorus lemniscatus

Gonatodes vittatus

Ishmael Samad recorded two separate sightings of the squirrel *Scirus granatensis* near the old leprosarium hospital. Squirrels have always been popular pets and it is possible that these are the descendants of escapees from the people who once lived here.

Monos

Confirmation that *H. palaichthus* is still extant on Monos was made on 22nd May, 1992 when one specimen was caught, identified and released in the now abandoned Villafana House in Grand Fond Bay, and by another adult specimen collected and released on 30th November, 1992 in a storage shed of the Siegert Bay house, about 350 metres from the first collection site.

The watchman of the Siegert house, Tommy Griffith, had as pets two sub-adult female *Geochelone*

carbonaria, and reported a "coral snake" killed in a house nearby. When asked if he had any theories about the presence of the tortoise on Monos Island, Tommy said he always accepted that they had been brought there by the illegal Grenadian immigrants, who, attracted to war-time jobs in Trinidad between the years 1939 and 1950, were often landed on Monos Island where they worked as domestics in the island houses before moving to mainland Trinidad to find jobs there.

Gaspar Grande (Gaspree) Island

To date five lizards, four snakes and one crocodilian have been recorded for Gaspar Grande. Boos (1983) suggested other reptiles were likely to be discovered there, listing nine more lizards as probable. Now we record the confirmation of five of the "probable" lizards, one unexpected one and a snake for which positive identification is awaited.

Lizards

Mabuya mabouya mabouya

A note of 4th Aug. 1968 by Quesnel reads as follows: "Seen at Gaspree some time in 1968, date not remembered". This species has not been seen on more recent trips to the island but it may simply have escaped notice because of its secretive habits.

Hemidactylus mabouia

One specimen was seen by Quesnel on the gun emplacement site on the ridge above and to the east of Pointe Baleine on 14th Oct. 1991.

Gonatodes vittatus

First recorded for the island by Quesnel on 29th January, 1990 when fifteen were seen on various buildings, trees and rocks at Bellevue. Six were subsequently seen at Bellevue on 14th Oct. 1991 and three eggs were collected that day at the recreation centre at the gun emplacement site above Pointe Baleine. These hatched in due course and were indeed *G. vittatus*.

Plica plica

One easily identifiable specimen was seen on a delapidated store room at Bellevue on 14th October, 1991. Three other lizards that may also have been *Plica plica* were seen nearby but none of these had the usual dark cross-banding, though seemingly the same size and form as the common *Plica*. They were all uniformly tan-coloured. Is this due to genetic drift in a small isolated population? (*Plica plica* on Monos and Huevos Islands are similar to the mainland specimens). Two specimens were seen at the same locality on 9th April, 1992.

Gymnophthalmus underwoodi

First recorded by Quesnel at Bellevue on 18th June 1990 when six were seen scurrying around in fallen dead leaves in a wooded area west of the house.

Ameiva ameiva atrigularis

This species was not considered probable by Boos (1983). However, a note of 5th July, 1970 by Quesnel reads: "Seen at Bellevue, Gasparee." Other notes of that same day record the presence of *Polychrus marmoratus* and *Anolis aeneus* at the same locality. Unlike *Mabuya*, *Ameiva* is well-known and is conspicuous wherever it occurs. It has not been seen at Bellevue during the years 1980 to the present though frequent trips there have been made. This raises the possibility that it no longer occurs on Gasparee, but a thorough search of other likely localities would have to be made before one could have confidence in such a conclusion.

Snakes

Another specimen of the Ratonel Snake, *Pseudoboa neuwiedii* was collected by residents of the houses on Point Baleine. Recently Fr. Anthony De Verteuil has noted a bright green snake which from his

description would suggest it is *Leptophis ahaetulla* rather than *Mastigodryas boddaerti*, which, on these islands, tends to conform to the mainland colour pattern of light brown with lighter dorso-lateral stripes, or light green with scales outlined in black giving a netted or reticulated appearance. It is hoped that a specimen will come to hand to afford a positive identification.

References

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