

REDISCOVERY OF THE EDIBLE FROG
LEPTODACTYLUS PENTADACTYLUS PENTADACTYLUS
(LAURENTI) IN TRINIDAD

by J. S. Kenny

The common edible frog of South America, *Leptodactylus p. pentadactylus*, has only once been recorded from Trinidad by Mole and Urich (1894). In his review of the amphibia of Trinidad, Parker (1933), who was working on a collection made by Vesey-Fitzgerald, suggested that the species may have become extinct, possibly a result of the introduction of the mongoose. It can now be confirmed that this species still exists in Trinidad and is in fact comparatively common in certain particular areas.

In June 1965, while trying to find tadpoles of *Rana palmipes* in the Mayaro area, an unusual chorus of a hither-to unheard frog voice was discovered in a small swamp on the Lizard Springs Road, seven miles to the south-east of Rio Claro. At first it was assumed that this chorus originated from the long sought *Rana Palmipes* but this turned out to be incorrect. About a dozen large heavy-bodied frogs were collected, all of which were males, and it was estimated that there were perhaps between fifty and a hundred males calling. These turned out to be *Leptodactylus p. pentadactylus*. During the next few weeks systematic searches were made along the length of the Lizard Springs Road and on the Maloney Road just west of Mayaro Beach. These field trips turned up five spawning sites on the former road and two on the latter. None of these sites seemed to have any more than perhaps five or ten males calling.

In the year following, the search was extended to cover the general area south and east of Rio Claro and the southern part of the Nariva Swamp. Several other spawning populations were found as far south as Guayaguayare and as far north as Sandbox Hill in the Nariva Swamp. At most of the spawning sites only a few males were heard calling, but in the Nariva one massive chorus of possibly several hundreds of individuals was located. Later in 1967, two mature specimens were taken in the Tamana caves, but so far no spawning sites have been found in the immediate area. Searches in the Moruga area have so far been negative.

It may reasonably be concluded that this species is still fairly common but probably confined to the south-east corner of the island. The reason why it has not been seen in all these years is probably related to its extreme shyness. Also, it would appear that unlike other leptodactylids, e.g. *L. sibilatrix* and *L. podicipinus*, it spawns only in the very early days of the rainy season in June and July, and is vocal only at this time. Its voice is a characteristic 'bloop bloop'. Unless one happened to be passing a spawning site on the few nights in the year when spawning takes place it would not be heard.

Leptodactylus p. pentadactylus, is a big handsome ground-dwelling frog, very similar in appearance to *L. podicipinus*, measuring 90 mm. in the males and 115 mm. in the females. During the spawning season, males have an enlarged bony spur on the insides of the hands and a very much thickened forearm. They will reflexly clamp one's hand when captured and are capable of causing some discomfort when they do this. The life history

is essentially similar to that of *L. podicipinus* except that the foam nest is very much larger, up to 30 cm by 6 m and is not as stable. Hatching is unusually rapid; the larvae hatch into the foam within 24 hours and leave the foam within 72 hours. Even larval life is attenuated and metamorphosis takes place within four weeks.

R E F E R E N C E S

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