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

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

*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 its 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 shal-

low 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 palmipes* 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 paradoxa* 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 palmipes* 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. palmipes* in such habitats

from just west of Chatham, throughout the Victoria Mayaro Reserve to within 4 km of Mayaro. Contrary to expectations, 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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