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Endemic climbing cavy *Kerodon acrobata* (Rodentia: Caviidae: Hydrochoerinae) from dry forest patches in the Cerrado domain: new data on distribution, natural history, and morphology

ALEXANDRA M. R. BEZERRA[1*], CIBELE R. BONVICINO[2],
ALBERT A. N. MENEZES[3] & JADER MARINHO-FILHO[4]

[1]*Departamento de Zoologia, Universidade de Brasília, CEP 70910-900, Brasília, DF, Brazil. E-mail: abezerra@fst.com.br*
[2]*Programa de Genética, CPQ, Instituto Nacional de Câncer, CEP20231-050, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil. E-mail: cibelerb@inca.gov.br*
[3]*PPG Genética, IB, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, CEP 21944-970, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil.*
E-mail: albertmenezes@gmail.com
[4]*Departamento de Zoologia, Universidade de Brasília, CEP 70910-900, Brasília, DF, Brazil. E-mail: jmarinho@unb.br*

Abstract

The distribution, natural history, and morphology of *Kerodon acrobata* were updated based on nine new collected specimens totalling 14 known specimens. Two new localities were added to the distribution range of this species. Data on habitat use indicated that the presence of this rodent is associated to the cerrado *sensu stricto* and seasonally dry tropical forest patches in the northeastern Cerrado domain. Analyses of these specimens increased the range of body size and craniodental measurements for *K. acrobata*. We also describe, for the first time, phallic morphology of *K. acrobata* which exhibits a subcylindral glans penis and a simple baculum. High hunting activity and continuous loss of its natural habitat are factors that can be negatively affecting its populations. Habitat replacement poses a likely risk the present diversity at seasonally dry tropical forest enclaves of the northeastern Cerrado domain.

Key words: Baculum, biogeography, morphometrics, seasonally dry tropical forest enclave

Introduction

The genus *Kerodon* Cuvier 1825 comprises two species, *K. rupestris* (Wied 1820) and *K. acrobata* Moojen, Locks, and Langguth 1997 (Woods & Kilpatrick 2005). These species inhabits open and seasonally dry tropical forests habitats from the eastern Cerrado domain, a savanna domain in Central Brazil, to the Caatinga domain, a semi-arid domain of northeastern Brazil. *Kerodon* species are medium-sized rodents (612–1040 g) commonly associated to stony outcrops (Alho 1982; Lessa *et al.* 2005). They are readily identified by a unique set of morphological characters like a very long muzzle, reduced size of ears, long mystacial vibrissae, short and blunt nails covered by hair, large digital pads, lack of tail, and gray-light brown agouti coarse pelage (Moojen *et al.* 1997).

The specific name, *acrobata*, has been provided in view of to its ability to climb high bushes and jump from on branch to another, and also of its high activity in captivity (Moojen *et al.* 1997). Lessa *et al.* (2005) recently reviewed the genus *Kerodon* and, on the basis of multivariate morphometrics of craniodental characters, corroborated *K. acrobata* as a full species. Although, this species is known only from type series, five specimens collected during July of 1960 (paratypes) and July of 1965 (holotype) in northeastern localities of the states of Goiás and, probably, Tocantins, in dry habitats west of the Serra Geral de Goiás (Moojen *et al.* 1997). Records based on voucher specimens of *K. acrobata* are scarce and all data on geographic distribution, morphology, and natural history on this species derive from these five type-series specimens and from some personal observations (*e.g.*, Marcelo Reis *in* Langguth & Reis 2008).

Herein, we report some recent records on ecology, skull morphometrics, and phallic morphology using *K. acrobata* voucher specimens. In addition we comment on *K. acrobata* endemism and seasonally dry tropical forest enclaves.

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