



Ctenomys brasiliensis Blainville (Rodentia: Ctenomyidae): clarifying the geographic placement of the type species of the genus *Ctenomys*

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Abstract

The genus *Ctenomys* (Rodentia: Ctenomyidae) comprises more than 60 species of subterranean rodents. Despite the wide distribution of the genus in southern America, the type locality of the type species—*Ctenomys brasiliensis* Blainville—was long thought to be the State of Minas Gerais in southeastern Brazil, well outside the presently known distributional area of the genus. Since it has never been collected again in that State, the type locality of this species is still a matter for investigation. In order to elucidate this question, we investigated the skull of the type specimens of *C. brasiliensis*. From geometric morphometrics comparisons with other species of the genus, and taking into account the label information, it was possible to rediscover the type locality of this species. There is no doubt that the specimen was collected in Minas, in the department of Lavalleja, Uruguay. Nowadays in this area on the southern coast of Uruguay, only populations of *Ctenomys pearsoni* Lessa and Langguth were recognized. We suggest that more studies must be done to better understand the taxonomic relation between *C. pearsoni* complex and the *C. brasiliensis*, the type species for the genus that was collected in Uruguay and never occurred in southeastern Brazil.

Key words: type locality, geometric morphometric, *Ctenomys pearsoni*, tuco-tucos

Introduction

The correct identification of type localities is of foremost importance, as for example in cases where doubts regarding the taxonomic status of described biological entities arise. The genus *Ctenomys* (Rodentia: Ctenomyidae) encompasses over 60 species, most of which are known only from their original descriptions (Contreras *et al.* 1977; Contreras & Berry 1982; Contreras 1995; Contreras 2000; Rosi *et al.* 2002; Wilson & Reeder 2005). For several species of this genus, the type localities are problematic or imprecisely defined: e.g., *C. opimus* Wagner, *C. nattereri* Wagner, *C. dorsalis* Thomas, *C. sericeus* Allen, *C. colburni* Allen, *C. fodax* Thomas, *C. saltarius* Thomas, *C. porteousi* Thomas, and *C. pontifex* Thomas. These subterranean rodents (tuco-tucos) are characterized by patchy distributions, low vagility, extensive karyotype variation, explosive radiation, and have attracted special interest in their speciation and evolution due to the mechanisms responsible for the great number of species which have allowed the genus to occupy many different environments (Reig *et al.* 1990; Freitas 2006; Lessa *et al.* 2008).

Members of this genus occur widely in southern South America, including Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, southern Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay, and southern and western Brazil (Reig *et al.* 1990; Lacey *et al.* 2000). The