

A review of the gekkotan lizards of Bénin, with the description of a new species of *Hemidactylus* (Squamata: Gekkonidae)

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Abstract

The gecko fauna of Bénin is extremely poorly known, with only two species having previously been mentioned in the literature on the basis of voucher specimens. We provide evidence for the occurrence of seven additional species, bringing the national total to nine confirmed species. Another five species are known from localities to both the east and west of Bénin and almost certainly are part of the national fauna. One of the species confirmed for Bénin is a new species of *Hemidactylus*. This new form is distinguished by its 14–16 dorsal tubercle rows, enlarged median subcaudal scales, atuberculate tail dorsum, 38 precloacal-femoral pores, and 6–7 (usually 7) divided scansors beneath digit four of both the manus and pes. We also provide the first record of *Lygodactylus conraui* for Togo.

Key words: West Africa, Bénin, Togo, Gekkonidae, Eublepharidae, *Hemidactylus*, description

Introduction

The herpetofauna of Bénin is among the most poorly documented of any African country. Bauer (1993) provided an estimate 125 reptile species for Bénin, including 31 lizard species. This, however, was based in large part on inference from broader distribution patterns and the presence of many of these species is not supported by the existence of voucher specimens in museum collections. A more recent estimate of 97 reptile species (World Resources Institute 2003) exists, but it is not known on what basis this total was calculated. Lizards, in particular, have been chronically understudied in most of West Africa, and this is perhaps most true for geckos, which, because of their nocturnal activity,