



New records of *Rhagomys rufescens* (Rodentia: Sigmodontinae) in the Atlantic forest of Brazil

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Abstract

Since it was trapped in the XIXth century, *Rhagomys rufescens* has been considered a rare endangered sigmodontine rodent and an endemic species of the Atlantic forest. Only a handful of vouchers of this taxon were known by Thomas, 1886. Recently, eight new individuals were collected, providing new geographical, morphological and phylogenetic (based on molecular evidence) information on this species. In the present work we report the southernmost occurrence record for *R. rufescens* at Indaial, Santa Catarina State, with the largest collected series of this species, the northernmost occurrence record at Santa Teresa, Espírito Santo State, and new records from Poços de Caldas, Minas Gerais State, from Ibiúna and Ribeirão Grande, São Paulo State.

Key words: *Rhagomys rufescens*, Atlantic forest, Montane forest and Biogeography

Introduction

Rhagomys rufescens (Thomas 1886) is a rare sigmodontine rodent and an endemic species of the Atlantic forest hotspot. For more than a century this species was thought to be restricted to the state of Rio de Janeiro and erroneously to the state of Minas Gerais (as clarified by Percequillo *et al.* 2004). Unfortunately, the first specimens of *R. rufescens* in the XIXth century lacked precise provenience and habitat description, which made it difficult to understand its geographic distribution. Also, the only known vouchers of this taxon were the two specimens employed by Thomas in the original description of both genus and species of *R. rufescens* (Percequillo *et al.* 2004; Pinheiro *et al.* 2004; Pardini & Umetsu *et al.* 2006; see also Luna & Patterson, 2003; Villalpando *et al.* 2006). Without additional records of this species and in view of widespread habitat conversion in the Atlantic Forest, *Rhagomys rufescens* was included in the IUCN red list (2006) as Critically Endangered and Presumably Extinct in the state of Rio de Janeiro (Baillie 1996; Bergallo 2000).

Recently, four new individuals of *R. rufescens* were collected, providing new geographical, morphological and molecular phylogenetic information on this species (Percequillo *et al.* 2004; Pinheiro *et al.* 2004; Pardini & Umetsu 2006). Even more surprising than its “rediscovery”, was the discovery of a related species, *R. longilingua* (Luna & Patterson 2003), from the tropical Andes approximately 1.300 km from the closest Atlantic forest locality. Subsequent, Villalpando *et al.* (2006) recorded *R. longilingua* in Bolivia, extending the distribution of the genus in the tropical Andes.