



A new species of the genus *Gonatodes* Fitzinger, 1843 (Reptilia: Sphaerodactylidae) from central Guyana, northern South America

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Abstract

A new sphaerodactyl lizard of the genus *Gonatodes* Fitzinger, 1843 is described from the Iwokrama Forest Reserve, central Guyana, Guiana Shield, northern South America. The new species, *Gonatodes timidus* sp. nov., is known so far from the type locality only, at ca. 210 m elevation. The new taxon is mainly distinguished from all known congeners by the following combination of characters: moderate body size, absence of a clearly differentiated elongate supraciliary spine, absence of clusters of distinctly enlarged conical scales on sides, escutcheon scales on posterior belly and ventral surfaces of thighs in males evident, three to four lateral rows of scales on distal part of fingers and toes, medial subcaudal scales distinctly differentiated from adjacent scales on non-regenerated tail (in a 1'1" sequence), and obvious sexual dichromatism, the males having the upper surface of the head black with bluish white to vivid yellow irregular stripes and blotches.

Key words: Endemism, Guiana Shield, Iwokrama, lizard, taxonomy

Introduction

The Neotropical genus *Gonatodes* currently contains 27 described species (Rojas-Runjaic *et al.* 2010, Schargel *et al.* 2010, Sturaro & Ávila-Pires 2011), of which nine (33%) have been described in the last seven years. As pointed out by Schargel *et al.* (2010) species richness in *Gonatodes* probably remains largely underestimated. Many *Gonatodes* species are apparently rather widespread, but restricted endemic species might not be uncommon in the genus. Six *Gonatodes* species are known to occur in the Guiana Shield, five of them being endemic to the area and apparently forming a monophyletic group together with a southwestern Amazonian species (see Schargel *et al.* 2010 for details).

All species, except one (the recently described *Gonatodes lichenosus* Rojas-Runjaic, Infante-Rivero, Cabello & Veloza, 2010) are strongly sexually dichromatic, and male ornamentations have been shown to be a useful character to separate species, even if variation in male colour and pattern has been recently documented (Schargel *et al.* 2010). All *Gonatodes* species are diurnal and non-vocalizing, except *G. antillensis* (Lidth de Jeude, 1887), in which nocturnality and ability to vocalize evolved secondarily according to Schargel *et al.* (2010).

The Iwokrama Forest Reserve located in central Guyana was intensively and extensively surveyed for amphibians and reptiles, mainly between May and August 1997 (Donnelly *et al.* 2005a, b). Those surveys resulted in the collection of about 2000 specimens of amphibians and reptiles (Donnelly *et al.* 2005a). Three scientific publications followed these investigations (Donnelly *et al.* 2005a, b, Wake & Donnelly 2010), and although no less than 11 putative new species were reported only one new taxon has been published to date (*Caecilita iwokrama* Wake & Donnelly, 2010). Among these 11 putative taxa is a *Gonatodes* that was reported as "*Gonatodes* sp." (Donnelly *et al.* 2005a, b), but, because no morphological data on that species have never been published, it remains uncertain whether these specimens belong to *G. alexandermendes* (described from central Guyana in 2006 by Cole & Kok), or to another species, or both.