



## A new striking dendrobatid frog (Dendrobatidae: Aromobatinae, *Aromobates*) from the Venezuelan Andes

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### Abstract

A new striking cloud frog of the genus *Aromobates* is described from the northwestern portion of the Cordillera de Merida in Venezuela. The new species is unique in several aspects, and its inclusion in *Aromobates* is supported by molecular analyses. This *Aromobates* is characterized by the presence of dark dorsolateral stripes, absence of pale dorsolateral, oblique lateral and ventrolateral stripes. Furthermore, it is the only non-aposematic *Aromobates* having dark to emerald green in life on dorsal surfaces and a highly ornamented pattern at both dorsal and ventral sides. This species is known from a single population in Carache (Trujillo State, Venezuela). Its population, although limited apparently to a small area, seems relatively abundant at the type locality and surroundings.

**Key words:** *Aromobates*, Dendrobatidae, Venezuela, Trujillo

### Resumen

Se describe una nueva especie del género *Aromobates* de la porción noroccidental de la Cordillera de Mérida en Venezuela. La nueva especie es única en varios aspectos y su inclusión en *Aromobates* está apoyada por análisis moleculares. Se caracteriza por la presencia de líneas dorsolaterales oscuras, y por la ausencia de líneas dorsolateral, ventrolateral y oblicua lateral; y además es el único *Aromobates* de Venezuela que presenta cromatoforos verde oscuros a esmeralda en vida en las superficies dorsales; y posee un patrón único, tanto dorsal como ventralmente. Su población, aunque circunscrita a una pequeña área alrededor de la localidad tipo, parece abundante.

**Palabras clave:** *Aromobates*, Dendrobatidae, Venezuela, Trujillo

### Introduction

The Venezuelan Andes (including the totality of the Cordillera de Merida and the northernmost portion of the Cordillera Oriental de Colombia; Barrio-Amorós 1998; Santos *et al.* 2009) harbor an astonishing diversity of dendrobatid frogs with 22 species (Barrio-Amorós 2009; Barrio-Amorós *et al.* 2010b). *Aromobates* is endemic to three relatively distinctive geographical areas (1) the Cordillera de Mérida, (2) the northernmost Eastern Cordillera Oriental de Colombia, and (3) the Sierra de Perijá (Rojas-Runjaic *et al.* 2011). Although the two last mountain chains share territory with Colombia, *Aromobates* is yet only known from Venezuela. This genus (*sensu* Grant *et al.* 2006) is monophyletic and it contains 13 described species (Rojas-Runjaic *et al.* 2011), but some more are to be published soon (Barrio-Amorós *et al.* in press). *Aromobates* was erected as a monotypic genus for one of the most extraordinary dendrobatid, *Aromobates nocturnus* Myers, Paolillo and Daly, 1991. This species is characterized by combination of autopomorphies including an extreme size (the largest dendrobatid reaching 64 mm), the presence of adductor mandibulae externus superficialis muscle, nocturnal and aquatic behavior (the only nocturnal and aquatic dendrobatid), and defensive mercaptanlike odor unique among dendrobatoids (Myers *et al.* 1991). Alternatively,