



## Lost in the middle of the sea, found in the back of the shelf: A new giant species of *Trachylepis* (Squamata: Scincidae) from Tinhosa Grande islet, Gulf of Guinea

LUIS M. P. CERÍACO<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Vertebrate Zoology and Anthropology, California Academy of Sciences, 55 Music Concourse Drive, San Francisco, California 94118, USA

<sup>2</sup>Museu Nacional de História Natural e da Ciência, Universidade de Lisboa, Rua da Escola Politécnica, 58, 1269-102 Lisbon, Portugal

### Abstract

A new species of *Trachylepis* is described from Tinhosa Grande islet, São Tomé e Príncipe, Gulf of Guinea. Tinhosa Grande islet is a small (20.5 ha), isolated desert islet used by several bird communities as a nesting place. The new species is distinguished from its congeners by its color pattern, size and lepidosis. Due to its limited geographical distribution the new species appears to be one of the most vulnerable vertebrate species on the planet. In this study we provide a brief discussion on the natural history of the new species, as well as conservation concerns and suggestions.

**Key words:** Conservation, São Tomé e Príncipe, taxonomy, Tinhosas, *Trachylepis adamastor*

### Resumo

Uma nova espécie de *Trachylepis* do ilhéu Tinhosa Grande, São Tomé e Príncipe, Golfo da Guiné é descrita. Tinhosa Grande é um ilhéu deserto, muito pequeno, utilizado por várias comunidades de aves como local de nidificação. Esta espécie distingue-se das suas congéneres por diferenças na coloração, tamanho e lepidose. Devido à sua distribuição geográfica limitada, a nova espécie parece ser uma das espécies de vertebrados mais ameaçadas do planeta. Uma breve discussão sobre a história natural da nova espécie, bem como questões ligadas à conservação da nova espécie são apresentadas.

**Palavras chave:** Conservação, nova espécie, São Tomé e Príncipe, Scincidae, taxonomia, Tinhosas, *Trachylepis adamastor*

### Introduction

*Trachylepis* Fitzinger, 1843 (Squamata: Scincidae) is one of the most speciose genera of scincid lizards on the planet, occurring across Africa, in the Gulf of Guinea oceanic islands, Madagascar, Indian ocean islands, as well as in Europe, near East and Central Asia, and in the Fernando Noronha archipelago off the coast of Brazil (Bauer 2003; Mausfeld *et al.* 2000; Uetz 2014). The *Trachylepis* fauna of the three major oceanic islands of the Gulf of Guinea (Príncipe, São Tomé and Annobón) is represented by three different species: *Trachylepis maculilabris* (Gray, 1845) in Príncipe and São Tomé islands; *Trachylepis affinis* (Gray, 1838) in Príncipe Island; and the endemic *Trachylepis ozorii* (Bocage, 1893) in Annobón Island (Manaças 1958; Manaças 1973a; Jesus *et al.* 2003; 2005). *Trachylepis maculilabris* is a widespread species complex with unclear systematics that ranges throughout most of sub-Saharan Africa, from the Gulf of Guinea islands to Madagascar (Uetz *et al.* 2014), comprising several highly divergent evolutionary lineages (Mausfeld *et al.* 2004; Rocha *et al.* 2010). Following the suggestion of Mausfeld *et al.* (2004), West African populations are here considered as the nominotypical *maculilabris*, while East Africa populations shall be considered as a different taxon. Jesus *et al.* (2005) concluded that the populations of *T. maculilabris* from São Tomé and Príncipe islands represent distinct molecular lineages, with divergence values