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Populations of Lesser Antillean Iguanas (*Iguana delicatissima*) have declined or disappeared on many islands. Those on Dominica are doing well and may serve as a model for developing management strategies for other islands (see *IGUANA* 14(4), p. 222).

# An Annotated Checklist of the Amphibians and Reptiles of Dominica, West Indies

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Travel writers have suggested that if Christopher Columbus were to take a Caribbean cruise today, Dominica might be the only West Indian island he would recognize. In an age when an ideal tropical paradise must include golf courses, five-star restaurants, towering hotels, cruise-ship berths, manicured white beaches, and swimming pools adjacent to the ocean, the drastic changes to which other destination islands have been subjected are understandable. However, an accident of geology spared Dominica from that fate. The island is a complex of volcanic peaks, the highest of which (Morne Diablotin) reaches 1,446 m above sea level, resulting in an intimidating terrain that has slowed the seemingly inevitable march of “progress.” Because level lowlands suitable for sugarcane plantations during the colonial era do not exist and tourism-oriented development is minimal, the inevitable consequences of deforestation and declining biodiversity are largely absent.

In sharp contrast, the potential for effective conservation is considerable, and Dominican authorities have taken steps to preserve two unique natural treasures: The forests, which still cover more than 60% of the island, and the animals that live in the largely natural habitats that remain. The amphibians and reptiles in particular comprise what may well be the most “natural” herpetofaunal community in the entire Lesser Antillean archipelago.

Although conserving forests and their inhabitants might not be a selling point for the vacationers to whose interests developers cater, Dominica benefits by promoting ecotourism, and markets itself as the “Nature Island.” By not competing for visitors whose sole interest is reclining in the lap of luxury, Dominica provides the chance to experience natural habitats, increasingly rare commodities that more intensely developed islands are about to lose entirely. However, in order to place a value on natural resources such as the herpetofauna, authorities must have access to reliable information about its distribution, natural history, and conservation status. Herein we present a summary of our observations on Dominica’s diverse herpetofaunal communities with the hope that it will remain relevant to coming generations.



JOHN S. PARMERLEE, JR.

Dominica (754 km<sup>2</sup>) is one of the volcanic Windward Islands in the Lesser Antilles. The rugged topography and lack of flat lowlands spared the island from the alterations (typically associated with sugar plantations) to which most other West Indian islands were subjected during the colonial period.

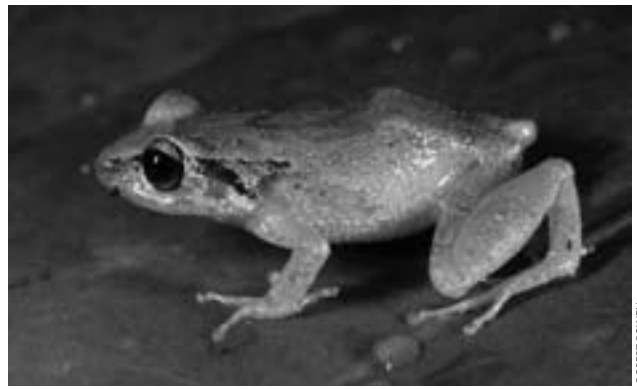
### Frogs (Amphibia: Anura)

*Eleutherodactylus amplinympha* (Kaiser, Green, and Schmid 1994). Anura: Eleutherodactylidae. Local name: Dominican Gounouj. English common names: Dominican Frog, Dominican Rain Frog, Dominican Whistling Frog, Endemic. These relatively small frogs (maximum male SVL 26 mm, maximum female SVL 50 mm) occur at elevations >300 m in montane rain forest, where they perch on trees, palm brakes, moss mats, epiphytes, and ferns. This species has a pointed snout and relatively large toepads. Males have bi-lobed glandular vocal sacs and produce a three-note call. Dorsal color varies from brownish to greenish to reddish, and, as in other frogs in the genus, pattern elements are highly variable. These largely nocturnal frogs are known to call by day in wet forests during or after heavy rains. The species is included on the IUCN Red List as “endangered,” primarily due to its restricted range, high likelihood of habitat loss attributable to human expansion, volcanism, or hurricanes, and the potential threat posed by chytridiomycosis, a fungal infection to which upland amphibians in the tropics appear to be particularly vulnerable.



The endangered Dominican Frog (*Eleutherodactylus amplinympha*) is restricted to moist forests at higher elevations.

*Eleutherodactylus johnstonei* (Barbour 1914). Anura: Eleutherodactylidae. No local name. English common names: Lesser Antillean Frog, Johnstone’s Whistling Frog, Johnstone’s Robber Frog. Lesser Antillean endemic, introduced on Dominica, other West Indian islands, and the South American mainland. These frogs are thought to have been introduced on Dominica after Hurricane David in 1979, probably with relief supplies from neighboring islands. Throughout their extended range, these small frogs (maximum male SVL 25 mm, maximum female SVL 35 mm) thrive in artificial sites such as residential gardens, agricultural areas, roadsides, and buildings from sea level to elevations of ~1300 m. This species has a rounded snout and relatively small toepads. Males have a single-lobed glandular vocal sac and produce a two-note call. Dorsal ground color usually is some shade of brown; other markings are highly variable. Where the two species occur together, *E. johnstonei* often is confused with closely related *E. martinicensis*. *Eleutherodactylus johnstonei* is a nocturnally active sit-and-wait predator with a diet composed primarily of small arthropods. Documented predators include Turnip-tailed Geckos (*Thecadactylus rapicauda*) and snakes. Recent surveys have failed



The Lesser Antillean Frog (*Eleutherodactylus johnstonei*) has been recorded from Dominica. Although it has successfully colonized other islands, where it has displaced native species, it has not been found during recent surveys, suggesting that the colonization of Dominica has failed. This frog was photographed on St. Vincent.

to document the presence of this species on Dominica and it is no longer included in the list of Dominican amphibians. This species is included on the IUCN Red List as being of “least concern,” largely attributable to its colonizing ability, which is unusual among amphibians, which generally have little tolerance for exposure to saltwater. Introduced populations on some islands compete successfully with native species, and often displace them, especially from altered habitats.

*Eleutherodactylus martinicensis* (Tschudi 1838). Anura: Eleutherodactylidae. Local name: Tink Frog. English common names: Martinique Frog, Martinique Robber Frog. This Lesser Antillean endemic is presumably native on Dominica, although it may have been imported inadvertently by early European settlers. These small frogs (maximum male SVL 32 mm, maximum female SVL 47 mm) occur from sea level to at least 1,250 m in varied natural and altered habitats that include rain forests, dry woodlands, banana and coconut plantations, and gardens. This species has a pointed snout and relatively small toepads. Males have a bi-lobed glandular vocal sac and produce a two-note call. Dorsal color is brownish to reddish; other markings are highly variable. These nocturnal frogs may call by day during or after



Like many relatives, patterns of Martinique Frogs (*Eleutherodactylus martinicensis*) are highly variable. This individual has a faint middorsal line, but others may be unicolored, blotched, or have very distinct dorsal “racing” stripes.

heavy rains. They feed on a variety of small arthropods, and have been observed foraging at night for insects attracted to lights. Predators include snakes and larger frogs. Fungal infections (chytridiomycosis) have been documented. This species is included on the IUCN Red List as “near threatened,” due to a known range of less than 5000 km<sup>2</sup> and potential habitat loss due to human expansion, volcanism, and hurricanes.

*Leptodactylus fallax* (Müller 1926). Anura: Leptodactylidae. Local names: Crapaud, Kwapo, Mountain Chicken. English common name: Giant Ditch Frog. Native. This species currently is restricted to Dominica and Montserrat, although it may once have occurred on neighboring islands. These large frogs (maximum male SVL 159 mm, maximum female SVL 200 mm) are found in association with streams from sea level to elevations of ~400 m. In addition to natural habitats, they can be found in deforested areas, gardens, and plantations. Dorsal ground color is olive-brown, with highly variable pattern elements. They are sit-and-wait predators, feeding primarily on small arthropods, but they occasionally take vertebrates such as small rodents, bats, frogs, lizards, and even snakes (one attempt on a small *Boa nebulosa* has been documented). Activity is almost exclusively noc-



ARLINGTON JAMES

Mountain Chickens (*Leptodactylus fallax*) are large frogs that have been extensively exploited as a delicacy. Other factors that have contributed to population declines are predation by invasive mammals (pigs, cats, rats, and dogs), habitat loss attributable to human development, volcanism, hurricanes, and fungal infections.



ARLINGTON JAMES

Dominican populations of the critically endangered Mountain Chicken (*Leptodactylus fallax*) have declined by 70% since 2002 as a consequence of the chytrid fungus.

turnal, although some foraging and calling may occur on rainy days. The species is included on the IUCN Red List as “critically endangered,” largely due to excessive exploitation as a delicacy. Other factors that have contributed to population declines are invasive predators (pigs, cats, rats, and dogs), habitat loss by human expansion, volcanism, hurricanes, and fungal infections. Chytridiomycosis was first recognized as a threat in December 2002; between 2002 and 2004, the disease is thought to have reduced populations on Dominica by 70%.

**Lizards (Reptilia: Squamata)**

*Ameiva fuscata* (Garman 1887). Squamata: Teiidae. Local name: Abòlò. English common name: Dominican Ground Lizard. Endemic. These large ground lizards (maximum male SVL 200 mm, maximum female SVL 154 mm) occur in lowland habitats such as coastal scrub, plantations, and open forests, but also may range to moderate elevations along road edges and in artificial clearings. Lizards have elongated pointed snouts and long, stocky tails. Smaller individuals are a mottled brown with light blue spots dorsally; large males have a black, slate-gray, to dark blue ground color with light blue spots. These lizards may run on their hindlimbs (bipedal) when engaged in chases or when frightened. *Ameiva fuscata* is a dietary generalist that feeds opportunistically, usually employing an active-foraging strategy, often in groups. It typically consumes arthropods, but will eat fallen fruit and small vertebrates, and is known to prey on *Iguana delicatissima* eggs and hatchlings. Lizards are most active at high temperatures and under direct sunlight, although they avoid the extreme mid-day heat. The conservation status of the species has not been assessed, but it is locally abundant and one of the most frequently seen lizards on Dominica.



JOHNS PARMELLE JR.



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Male Dominican Ground Lizards (*Ameiva fuscata*) often are strikingly blue (top), whereas females (bottom) retain the juvenile brown color well beyond maturity.



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Because Dominica was historically forested, sun-loving Dominican Ground Lizards (*Ameiva fuscata*) had to take advantage of very small patches of sunlight. This juvenile had been actively foraging in the leaf litter before pausing in a patch where a bit of light penetrated the canopy.

*Anolis cristatellus* (Duméril and Bibron 1837). Squamata: Polychrotidae. No local name. English common name: Puerto Rican Crested Anole. Endemic to the Puerto Rico Bank; introduced on Dominica (where first discovered in 2000) and in the



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Puerto Rican Crested Anoles (*Anolis cristatellus*) were first discovered on Dominica in 2000. They are displacing native *A. oculatus* along much of the dry leeward (western) coast of the island.



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In areas where they occur together, males of native *Anolis oculatus* (bottom in top photograph, top in bottom photograph) and recently introduced *A. cristatellus* are strongly antagonistic toward one another.

Dominican Republic, southern Florida, and Costa Rica. These moderately sized anoles (male SVL to 77 mm, female SVL to 73 mm) typically exploit edge habitats in heavily disturbed areas along roadsides and in open fields and woodlands from sea level to elevations of ~980 m on the Puerto Rico Bank. Females and juveniles often forage on the ground. Lizards usually are light to dark brown and even greenish gray, often changing color depending on mood. Pattern elements include small dark spots, saddle-shaped markings, or distinct cross-bands. A light longitudinal middorsal stripe bordered by narrow dark lines is common in females but can be found on some, especially smaller males. Although primarily diurnal, they are known to extend activity to after dark, exploiting insects attracted to artificial lights. These sit-and-wait foragers eat mainly small arthropods, but may consume fruits, flowers, or nectar. On Dominica, they have been observed eating fruit flies on fallen mangos as well as ingesting the mango pulp. The conservation status of the species has not been formally assessed. As an invasive species on Dominica, the principal concern is its potential effect on endemic *A. oculatus*, which apparently is being displaced in dry lowland coastal habitats along the western (leeward) coast. One possible means of displacement might be intraguild predation, in which one related species exploits another as food, with large adults eating young *A. oculatus*. At one coastal site where both species occurred, juvenile *A. cristatellus* were abundant, but no juvenile *A. oculatus* were observed.



JEFFREY W. ACKLEY



RUTH E. CARTER



PETER J. MUELEMAN

Like many relatives, Dominican Anoles (*Anolis oculatus*) exhibit sexual size dimorphism, with males much larger than females. This is generally seen in species in which males compete with one another for mates.

Dominican Anoles (*Anolis oculatus*) vary considerably in color and pattern in different parts of the island. For many years, biologists treated these populations as separate species or subspecies, but today they usually are considered to be ecotypes (populations with habitat-specific color and pattern adaptations). However, males (top) all have bright yellow dewlaps, which are used to deter other males and advertise for females. Anoles that live in cool, moist uplands, such as this female (bottom) often are distinctly green, whereas lowland anoles have a tan to brown ground color.

*Anolis oculatus* (Cope 1879). Squamata: Polychrotidae. Local name: Zandoli. English common name: Dominica Anole. Endemic. These anoles (maximum male SVL 96 mm, maximum female SVL 64 mm, although sizes vary considerably in different areas of the island) are essentially ubiquitous on Dominica, occurring in natural to extensively altered habitats that include roadside vegetation, dry forest, banana, mango, and coconut groves and plantations, artificial sites along walls, fences, and paved areas, and essentially all vegetation types except elfin



woodland from sea level to elevations of ~900 m. Populations are quite variable on different parts of the island. Once considered to be subspecies, these color variants now usually are treated as ecotypes (populations with habitat-specific color and pattern adaptations). Ground color may range from light to dark brown, although individuals in upland forests may be dark green. Females usually are unicolored or have a few black and beige spots. Males are more distinctive, ranging from largely unicolored animals with a few light specks to those having prominent black and beige spots. These sit-and-wait foragers eat small arthropods, and may in some instances “specialize” in concentrated resources such as social insects (e.g., ants and termites). They may occasionally consume plant material, including the pulp of fallen mangos. Although primarily diurnal, like many other West Indian anoles, *A. oculatus* readily exploits insects attracted to lights at night. The conservation status of these lizards has not been assessed, but at least some populations are vulnerable to displacement by *A. cristatellus*.

*Mabuya mabouya* (Lacépède 1788). Squamata: Scincidae. Local names: Kléwant, Zannoli Kléwant, Soud. English common name: Lesser Antillean Skink. Native; however, the taxonomic status of West Indian populations currently assigned to the genus *Mabuya* is poorly resolved, and populations on each island bank should be considered endemic to that bank until detailed studies have been conducted. These diurnally active lizards (maximum male SVL 87 mm, maximum female SVL 93 mm) occur in dry coastal woodlands, littoral woodland, dry shrubs,

and coconut plantations, where they occupy leaf litter and take refuge in holes in trees and stumps or in and under boulders. Skinks are shiny, with very smooth scales. Ground color is bronze or coppery, with a cream-bordered darker brown band on each side and very dark brown or black specks on the back. These lizards bear live young that are very large compared to maternal size. The conservation status of this species has not been assessed.

*Gymnophthalmus pleii* (Bocourt 1881). Squamata: Gymnophthalmidae. No local name. English common names: Rough-scaled Worm Lizard, Keeled-scaled Worm Lizard. Lesser Antillean endemic; the subspecies *G. p. pleii* occurs on Martinique, Dominica, and Guadeloupe, other subspecies occur



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Like their relatives, Rough-scaled Worm Lizards (*Gymnophthalmus pleii*) occur primarily in leaf litter, where they are adept at “swimming” through the leaves, making them difficult to find and study.



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The taxonomic status of West Indian populations currently assigned to the Lesser Antillean Skink (*Mabuya mabouya*) is poorly resolved, and populations on each island bank should be considered endemic to that bank until detailed studies have been conducted.

on St. Lucia and the Maria Islands. These small lizards (maximum SVL 48 mm) inhabit dry leaf litter with relatively high amounts of sunlight along the leeward (western) coast, and are particularly abundant in Cabrits National Park. Ground color is golden with darker lateral bands and golden-yellow canthal stripes that continue over the eyes and fade near the hindlimbs. Worm Lizards often are thought to be juvenile skinks. Unlike some other species in the genus, *G. pleii* is bisexual. Lizards presumably feed on small arthropods. The species' conservation status has not been assessed.

*Gymnophthalmus underwoodi* (Grant 1958). Squamata: Gymnophthalmidae. No local name. English common name: Smooth-scaled Worm Lizard. Neotropical endemic, with populations on the South American mainland and a number of Lesser Antillean islands; the population on Dominica presumably is native (established by natural means), but the introduction may have been human-mediated. These small, diurnally active, ground-dwelling lizards (maximum SVL 43 mm) are associated with leaf litter in dry forests, beachside vegetation, and mixed agriculture with introduced orchard trees, usually at sites where sunlight penetrates for at least part of each day. Populations are known only from the leeward (western) side of the island from sea level to elevations of ~300 m. Body scales are smooth. The metallic brown back and silvery-white belly are separated by a dark brown lateral stripe. These lizards forage for small invertebrates in the leaf litter. Predators include cats, wild birds and chickens, and presumably snakes and larger lizards. This species is entirely female, reproducing by means of parthenogenesis (eggs developing without fertilization), enhancing the species' ability to colonize new areas, as only one individual is necessary to found a population. *Gymnophthalmus underwoodi* and *G. pleii* appear to be allopatric (do not occur together). The conservation status of the species has not been assessed.



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Smooth-scaled Worm Lizards (*Gymnophthalmus underwoodi*) are all females, reproducing by means of parthenogenesis (eggs developing without fertilization), enhancing the species' ability to colonize new areas, as only one individual is necessary to found a population.

*Iguana delicatissima* (Laurenti 1768). Squamata: Iguanidae. Local name: Lèza. English common name: Lesser Antillean Iguana. Lesser Antillean endemic. These large lizards (male SVL to 434 mm, female SVL to 401 mm) occur in natural and altered habitats along cliff faces, in lowland forests, and often close to streams. Although the distribution is largely coastal, iguanas may be found at elevations to ~300 m. Concentrations may occur in the vicinity of communal nesting beaches to which females migrate from considerable distances. These lizards are largely arboreal but reg-

ularly venture onto the ground. Color varies greatly. Hatchlings are bright green, but this fades with age to dark gray with hints of green, blue, brown, and occasionally pink around the snout and facial features. Males tend to be darker than females, which frequently retain a primarily green coloration into maturity. Males have larger heads, prominent dewlaps, and conspicuous femoral pores on the undersides of their thighs. Individuals spend much of their time adjusting body positions and perch heights to regulate body temperatures. The diet includes flowers, fruits, and leaves of many plants. Iguanas are quick to exploit introduced ornamentals and appear to have a particular fondness for hibiscus. Juveniles are known to eat bird eggs, and iguanas of all ages may scavenge. Adults have few predators except humans and the occasional boa, but major predators on eggs and hatchlings include crabs, rats, and *Ameiva fuscata*. The species is included



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Lesser Antillean Iguanas (*Iguana delicatissima*) are phenomenally abundant on the grounds of the Sunset Bay Club on Dominica's leeward (western) coast. The proximity of the Batali River and a communal nesting site, an abundance of forage, and the tolerance of the resort's owners account for population densities seen nowhere else in the world.



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Male Lesser Antillean Iguanas (*Iguana delicatissima*) are very territorial. The proximity of adult males on the ground of the Sunset Bay Club resulted in overlapping home ranges and frequent agonistic interactions.



on the IUCN Red List as “vulnerable,” but some populations are “critically endangered.” The population on Dominica is faring much better than those on many other islands, where exploitation by humans, habitat destruction, or competition and even hybridization with introduced Common Iguanas (*Iguana iguana*) have resulted in extirpations and dramatic declines. Hunting iguanas is illegal on Dominica, although it still occurs. Many individuals, especially females migrating to coastal nesting sites, are killed on the roads.

*Hemidactylus mabouia* (Moreau de Jonnès 1818). Squamata: Gekkonidae. Local name: Mabouya Kai. English common names: Common House Gecko, Cosmopolitan House Gecko. These geckos, with populations in Africa and throughout the Neotropics, are human commensals. Whether the population on Dominica arrived by natural or human-mediated means is unknown. The nocturnal lizards (maximum male SVL 68 mm, maximum female SVL 61 mm) occur on walls and roofs of buildings and under loose concrete, logs, and rocks. They are pale but often change color in response to their habitat. Individuals found on the ground under loose bark and logs may be whitish gray to light brown, with bands on their backs. These lizards are frequently observed eating insects around lights at night. Their conservation status has not been assessed.



JEFFREY W. ACKLEY

Common House Geckos (*Hemidactylus mabouia*) are frequently observed eating insects around lights at night.

*Sphaerodactylus fantasticus* (Duméril and Bibron 1836). Squamata: Sphaerodactylidae. No local name. English common name: South Leeward Sphaero (Dwarf Gecko). Lesser Antillean endemic, the subspecies *S. f. fuga* is endemic to Dominica. These small diurnal geckos (female SVL to 29 mm, male SVL to 28 mm) occur in leaf litter of dry forests and beachside vegetation

along the northern leeward (western) coast. Population densities may be very high in some areas. *Sphaerodactylus fantasticus* is sexually dimorphic. Males have a dark blue head with light-blue and white spots, whereas those of females have two light stripes that begin as an inverted V and extend onto the body. Body ground color is usually brownish, dark orange, or maroon. Light blue rings often surround the eyes of both sexes. These geckos feed on a variety of small invertebrates. The conservation status of this species has not been assessed.



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NELSON J. VELEZ ESPINET

South Leeward Dwarf Geckos (*Sphaerodactylus fantasticus*) are sexually dimorphic. Males (top) have very dark heads with light spots, whereas females (bottom) are more distinctly patterned, but have striped heads.

*Sphaerodactylus vincenti* (Boulenger 1891). Squamata: Sphaerodactylidae. No local name. English common name: Windward Sphaero (Dwarf Gecko). Lesser Antillean endemic, the subspecies *S. v. monilifer* is endemic to Dominica. These small lizards (both male and female SVL to 40 mm, although the largest Dominican geckos reach only 32 mm SVL) occur in leaf litter of upland rain forests and habitats modified for agriculture to elevations as high as 900 m. These geckos are much less frequently encountered than *S. fantasticus*. *Sphaerodactylus vincenti* is sexually dimorphic. Dorsal ground color of both sexes is brown, but males have two black “eye-spots” (ocelli) on the shoulders, with the rest of the back variously marbled with dark brown. Two light lines outlined with black extend to between the ocelli. Females lack ocelli, but have spots on the shoulders lateral to the lines. The conservation status of this species has not been assessed.

*Thecadactylus rapicauda* (Houttuyn 1782). Squamata: Phyllodactylidae. Local names: Mabouya Hazyé, Mabouya ban-



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Windward Dwarf Geckos (*Sphaerodactylus vincenti monilifer*) occur in leaf litter of upland rain forests and habitats modified for agriculture to elevations as high as 900 m. These geckos are much less frequently encountered on Dominica than *S. fantasticus*. *Sphaerodactylus vincenti* is sexually dimorphic. Males have two black “eye-spots” (ocelli) on the shoulders, whereas females lack ocelli, but have light spots on the shoulders.



JEFFREY W. ACKLEY



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Throughout much of the species’ range, Turnip-tailed Geckos (*Thecadactylus rapicauda*) are less likely to associate with humans than “house” geckos in the genus *Hemidactylus*. On Dominica, however, these large geckos frequently exploit insects attracted to lights at night and take advantage of the many cracks and crevices in buildings to seek refuge by day.

nann, Mabouya Hòtè. English common names: Thick-tailed Gecko, Turnip-tailed Gecko. Neotropical endemic; presumably native on Dominica. These geckos (male SVL to 125 mm, female SVL to 126 mm) occur in dry forests and are arboreal. They often exploit the night-light niche and can be common in artificial habitats, although they are less likely to function as human commensals than *Hemidactylus mabouia*. They are known to be nocturnal but have been found basking during the day. Ground color and pattern elements are highly variable, ranging from unicolorous pale to dark gray, brown, or even deep orange to having variable dark brown to slate gray or black markings. Color can change dramatically from day to night. Like many geckos, *T. rapicauda* is vocal, often producing a series of chirps decreasing sequentially in volume. The diet consists of insects, other small arthropods, and occasionally smaller lizards. The disproportionately swollen tail, especially when regenerated, is used to store fat. The conservation status of these widely distributed geckos has not been assessed.

**Snakes (Reptilia: Squamata)**

*Boa nebulosa* (Lazell 1964). Squamata: Boidae. Local names: Tête-chien, Tèt-chyen. English common name: Clouded Boa. Dominican endemic. These large nocturnal snakes (maximum SVL ~3 m) occur in woodland and montane forests, scrub, and



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Clouded Boas (*Boa nebulosa*) are the largest snakes on Dominica. Until recently, they were considered a subspecies of the wide-ranging *B. constrictor*.

on vegetated cliff faces. They can sometimes be found in more disturbed areas, such as along the edges of banana fields. They seek shelter by day in hollow logs, rock piles, tree roots, and under natural and human debris. Ground color ranges from tan

to grayish-brown to dark brown with 23–35 rectangular or irregular dark dorsal saddles. The pattern appears to be washed-out on much of the body, but becomes increasingly distinct near the tail. Like other members of the family Boidae, *B. nebulosa* gives birth to live young. The diet consists of small vertebrates such as agoutis, iguanas, and chickens. Adults have few natural predators, but humans hunt them for medicinal oil. The conservation status of the species is unknown, but all boids are included in CITES Appendix II.

*Alsophis antillensis* (Schlegel 1837). Squamata: Colubridae. Local names: Kouwès Nwè, Koulèv. English common name: Dominican Racer. Lesser Antillean endemic; the subspecies *A. a. sibonius* is a Dominican endemic (other subspecies occur on neighboring islands). These diurnal snakes (maximum female and male SVL 905 mm) occur in rain forest, rain forest edges, coastal scrub, mountain pastures, mangrove edges, deciduous forests, and orchards/plantations. Adult coloration is dark taupe through milk chocolate to very dark brown, dark slate gray, and jet black with white, cream, or light brown blotches. Juveniles have a distinct pattern that becomes obscured with age as a result of increased pigment deposition. These snakes are predominantly diurnal, with activity peaks at mid-morning and late afternoon. Species of *Alsophis* feed primarily on lizards (especially anoles), but may consume a variety of terrestrial vertebrates such as frogs, birds, rodents, and sometimes other snakes. They use a combination of active foraging and ambush foraging strategies, and may extend activity into the night to hunt anoles eating insects attracted to artificial lights. Their conservation status has not been assessed.



LAUREN A. WHITE

Dominican Racers (*Alsophis antillensis sibonius*) are predominantly diurnal, with activity peaks at mid-morning and late afternoon, but they may extend activity through midday on cloudy or rainy days.

*Liophis juliae* (Cope 1879). Squamata: Colubridae. Local names: Kouwès jenga, Kouwès zenga, Grove Snake. English common names: Dominican Ground Snake, Leeward Ground Snake. Lesser Antillean endemic; the subspecies *L. j. juliae* is a Dominican endemic (other subspecies occur on Guadeloupe and Marie-Galante). These diurnally active, ground-dwelling snakes (SVL to 458 mm) occur in rain forest, cut-over hardwoods, and dry forest. Ground color is typically black with a “salt and pepper” pattern of white to yellow spots. Communal nests have been found. These active foragers feed primarily on small vertebrates, including frogs, lizards (especially anoles), and lizard eggs. Less frequently encountered and presumably less abundant on Dominica than *Alsophis antillensis*, the conservation status of the species is unknown.



JEFFREY W. ACKLEY

Diurnally active, ground-dwelling Dominican Ground Snakes (*Liophis juliae juliae*) occur in rain forest, cut-over hardwoods, and dry forest.

*Typhlops dominicanus* (Stejneger 1904). Squamata: Typhlopidae. Local names: Kouwès dé-tèt, Koulèv, Coffin Borer. English common name: Dominican Blindsnake. Endemic. These burrowing snakes (maximum SVL 385 mm) occur in well-shaded areas under rocks and logs, but may be encountered on the surface after heavy rains. They have a small, blunt head with scales covering the rudimentary eyes and a short tail equipped with a ter-



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Dominican Blindsnakes (*Typhlops dominicanus*) are larger than most of their relatives. All blindsnakes are burrowers and are rarely encountered except when heavy rains bring them to the surface (much like earthworms). This individual was found on a trail in Cabrits National Park in northwestern Dominica.

minal spine that serves as an anchor when burrowing. Ground color is pale to very dark gray or dark brown. Little is known about these snakes, which, although rarely seen, are believed to be a numerically important component of the Dominican herpetofauna. The conservation status of this species is unknown.

#### Turtle (Reptilia: Chelonia)

*Chelonoidis carbonaria* (Spix 1824). Chelonia: Testudinidae. Local name: Mòròkòy. English common name: Red-footed Tortoise. Neotropical endemic; whether turtles on Dominica arrived naturally via over-water dispersal or were introduced by humans is unknown. Many West Indian populations may include descendants of naturally occurring ancestors or of tortoises introduced by Native American or colonial-era Europeans for food or as pets by more recent island residents. These turtles (shell length in males to 60 cm, in females to ~40 cm) occur in forests as well as more open habitats. Despite their size, they are rarely encountered even where abundant. Almost never found on Dominica, the very existence of a wild population is questionable. The top of the shell is black with yellow markings; the underside of the shell is yellow with black markings. Some scales on the legs and tail are reddish orange. The diet consists primarily of plant material, but small arthropods and other invertebrates may be consumed. In many parts of their range, these tortoises are captured for food or for the pet trade. Although listed in CITES Appendix II, no formal assessment of conservation status has been completed.



ARLINGTON JAMES

Red-footed Tortoises (*Chelonoidis carbonaria*) are rarely encountered on Dominica and whether a wild population exists is questionable.

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# IGUANA

CONSERVATION, NATURAL HISTORY, AND HUSBANDRY OF REPTILES

International Reptile Conservation Foundation

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Dominican Anoles (*Anolis oculatus*) are ubiquitous on Dominica, but populations on different parts of the island vary consistently in color and pattern — to the extent that they were considered to be different species or subspecies until recently. See article on p. 130.