Establishment of the Common House Gecko, *Hemidactylus frenatus* Duméril & Bibron, on Saint Lucia

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House geckos of the genus *Hemidactylus* are well known as some of the most widespread and successful lizard invaders following anthropogenic introductions to novel environments (Agarwal et al. 2021). In particular, the Indo-Pacific Gecko (*Hemidactylus garnotii* Duméril & Bibron), West African House Gecko (*Hemidactylus angulatus* Hallowell), Mediterranean Gecko (*Hemidactylus turcicus* [Linnaeus]), Tropical House Gecko (*Hemidactylus mabouia* [Moreau de Jonnès]), and the Common House Gecko (*Hemidactylus frenatus*) have collectively established themselves across North, Central, and South America (Weterings & Vetter 2018); common names from Hedges et al. (2019). In the majority of Caribbean islands, African *H. mabouia* was introduced and established stable populations in the seventeenth century (Agarwal et al. 2021); however, new populations are still being reported (Griffing & Bauer 2016). In recent years, Asian *H. frenatus* sightings have been reported from Caribbean islands, including Cuba (Powell et al. 2011; Díaz 2014), Hispaniola (Scantlebury et al. 2010), Puerto Rico (Sánchez 2018), Curaçao (Behm et al. 2019), and most recently Dominica (Brisbane et al. 2021). The report of *H. frenatus* in Dominica was the first note of this species in the Lesser Antilles. Brisbane et al. (2021) searched iNaturalist to identify an additional putative cases from the Lesser Antilles: a record from Saint Lucia (iNaturalist 2022). However, the angle of the observation and overall quality prevented them from definitively confirming the identity as *H. frenatus*. Herein we provide a report that not only is *H. frenatus* present in Saint Lucia, it is well-established in several parts of the island.

We first observed *Hemidactylus frenatus* in the southeastern portion of Pigeon Island, Gros Islet, Saint Lucia (14.092968, -60.962393) on 13 January 2022 at 12:27 h. This adult was spotted on the side of a small rock under the shade of a large almond tree (*Terminalia catappa*). Initial attribution to *H. frenatus*, instead of *H. mabouia*, which is known from Saint Lucia, was based on dorsal color pattern and absence of large, dorsal tuberculate scales (Krysko & Daniels 2005; Daltry 2009; Fig. 1). We found two additional individuals from Pigeon Island on 14 January 2022 and 16 January 2022 by similar means. We observed more *H. frenatus* in the southern portion of the island. In the western side of Sandy Beach, Vieux Fort, Saint Lucia (13.731158, -60.940570) on 18 January 2022 between 18:40 h and 20:00 h, we observed 15 *H. frenatus* on buildings, coconut palms (*Cocos nucifera*), and sea grapes (*Coccoloba uvifera*). We collected two specimens from this population (MPM RA34077, MPM RA34078), preserved their livers in RNA later and fixed their remaining bodies in 80% EtOH. On 19 January 2022, we observed six individuals in a recreation park near UVF International Airport, Vieux Fort, Saint Lucia (13.729162, -60.944682) between 15:50 h and 16:30 h in crevices of large trees and under leaf litter. On the same day, we observed 16 individuals in large trees near Hellene, Micoud, Saint Lucia (-13.776523, -60.909681) between 17:00 h and 17:30 h. We then observed 19 individuals on the eastern side of Sandy Beach, Vieux Fort, Saint Lucia (13.732078, -60.939000) between 18:00 h and 19:00 h.
In total, we observed 59 *H. frenatus* in Saint Lucia, spanning nearly the entire longitude of the island. Individuals ranged from hatchlings to adults. These observations suggest that *H. frenatus* is well-established in Saint Lucia and likely has been for years. *Hemidactylus frenatus* and *H. mabouia* superficially look similar and it is likely *H. frenatus* were mistaken for *H. mabouia*, which has been established in Lesser Antilles for hundreds of years (Agarwal et al. 2021). *Hemidactylus frenatus* can be readily distinguished from *H. mabouia* by their dorsal anterior-posterior striped pattern, small numbers or absence of tuberculate scales on the dorsum, and adhesive scanners which sit along the entire length of the underside of digit IV (Krysko & Daniels 2005; Powell et al. 1998a; Fig. 1).

Several invasive gecko species, particularly *H. frenatus*, have been implicated in the decline of native geckos due to a combination of predation, competition, and introduction of parasites (e.g. Petren & Case 1996; Cole et al. 2005; Perella & Behm 2020). This is a particularly concerning prospect, as areas we surveyed were previously inhabited by native Turniptail Geckos (*Thecadactylus rapicauda* [Houttuyn]; Lesmond, pers. obs.); however, our search yielded no individuals of *T. rapicauda*. *Hemidactylus frenatus* has also been implicated in outcompeting *H. mabouia* in some cases (Powell et al. 1998b; Sánchez 2018). The *H. frenatus* we found were often on the same structure or branch with *H. mabouia*; although, we always found fewer *H. mabouia* than *H. frenatus*. This suggests *H. frenatus* is potentially outcompeting *H. mabouia* as well.

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