


## Establishment of the Common House Gecko, *Hemidactylus frenatus* (Duméril & Bibron), on Antigua

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Since 2021, the Common House Gecko (*Hemidactylus frenatus*) has been reported from multiple islands in the Lesser Antilles. However, the precise timing of the species' arrival within the region and on individual islands is difficult to pinpoint as its close similarity to *Hemidactylus mabouia* likely has caused it to go unnoticed for a long time (Brisbane *et al.* 2021, Griffing *et al.* 2022). Recent reports of new distributional records for *H. frenatus* are for Dominica (Brisbane *et al.* 2021), St. Martin (Dewynter *et al.* 2022), St. Lucia (Griffing *et al.* 2022), St. Kitts (Thorpe 2022), St. Barthélemy (Questel *et al.* 2023), and St. Eustatius (Thibaudier *et al.* 2023). Here, we report the first record and establishment of the species on Antigua.



**Figure 1.** *Hemidactylus frenatus* captured on 14 November 2023 at the harbor of Antigua; snout-vent length 5.9 cm. Photo: Matthijs P. van den Burg.

On 14 November 2023, between 20.45–21.15 h, we surveyed buildings and materials just outside of the wall, compound, and annex facilities of the main port of St. John's, Antigua (17.126411, -61.852925). *Hemidactylus frenatus* was found inside and between ~8-meter-long PVC pipes that were laying outside on bare soil. We captured three adult individuals and confirmed the species identity through assessment of the lamellae on digit IV (Krysko & Daniels 2005). One animal was photographed (Figure 1). We observed another four adult individuals within and between the pipes. We caught an additional two juveniles of *H. frenatus*, 50 meters northeast and 20 meters southeast of the pipes on the side of a boat and a fence, respectively. This is the first report of *Hemidactylus frenatus* from Antigua and shows that the species is established and capable of spreading on the island. During our survey we found a single *H. mabouia*, located by itself on three pallets halfway between the PVC pipes and the boat. Because *H. frenatus* is a known strong competitor of native gecko species (e.g., Petren & Case 1996), and apparently of introduced *H. mabouia* (Sánchez 2018), it will be important to monitor its spread and impact on other geckos.

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