Another new cryptic frog related to *Eleutherodactylus varleyi* Dunn (Amphibia: Anura: Eleutherodactylidae), from eastern Cuba

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**M**

**T**errarana, *Euh**

**y**as, West Indies, Guantánamo, new species, female reciprocation calls, eggs.

**I**

N**T**RODUCTION

After a recent review of the geographic variation of the Cuban Grass Frog *Eleutherodactylus varleyi* Dunn, Díaz *et al.* (2012) described *E. feichtingeri*, a cryptic species widely distributed in central and eastern Cuba. The two species differ primarily in tympanum size, supratympanic stripe pattern, and advertisement calls. Species recognition was also supported by genetic and cytogenetic data. One of the authors (SBH) conducted DNA sequence analyses that confirmed the existence of two species at La Munición, Humboldt National Park. One species is *E. feichtingeri* and the other is a new species that we describe here. Subsequently, in the summer of 2011, LMD collected additional specimens of the new taxon, made recording of vocalizations, and obtained data on ecology and behavior.

**M**

**A**T**E**rials and METHODS

Morphological and bioacoustical measurements were taken as mentioned in Díaz *et al.* (2012). Advertisement and reciprocation calls were defined following Duellman and Trueb (1986:97). A portion (~800 bp) of the cytochrome b (Cyt-b) mitochondrial gene was sequenced for four species and all molecular methods were identical to those in our previous study (Díaz *et al.*, 2012). Calls were recorded with a Marantz PMD 661 digital sound recorder and a Sennheiser ME 66 microphone. Acoustic signals were digitized at 44 kHz and a sample size
of 16 bits. Bioacoustic analysis was performed with the software BatSound 5.1 (Pettersson Elektronic AB, © 1996–1999). Physical environmental parameters were measured with a Kestrel 3500 Pocket Weather Meter.

The following abbreviations are used: SVL, snout-vent length; MNHNCu, Museo Nacional de Historia Natural de Cuba; MCZ, Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University; AMNH, American Museum of Natural History; LMD, field number series of Luis M. Díaz (specimens deposited in the MNHNCu); SBH, field number series of S. Blair Hedges; CZACC, zoological collection of the Instituto de Ecología y Sistemática, La Habana; BSC.H, herpetological collection of BIOECO (Centro Oriental de Ecosistemas y Biodiversidad), Museo de Historia Natural Tomás Romay, Santiago de Cuba; MFP, Museo Felipe Poey, Facultad de Biología, Universidad de La Habana. Specimens for comparisons are listed in Appendix I.

Eleutherodactylus beguei sp. nov.

Fig. 1A, B

Diagnosis. A very small species of the Eleutherodactylus gundlachi species group, Eleutherodactylus planirostris species series, and subgenus Euhyas (Hedges et al. 2008). Males reach 14.2 mm SVL, and the only known female is 15.2 mm SVL. The other members of the species group include E. feichtingeri, E. intermedius, E. tetajulia, and E. varleyi. Eleutherodactylus beguei sp. nov. is not as robust, stocky, and large-headed as E. intermedius and E. tetajulia, but tends to have the head as longer as wide (average HL = HW), compared with the more gracile species E. feichtingeri and E. varleyi (average HL > HW). However, it shares pointed digital tips with the two stocky species (tips rounded in the two gracile species). Eleutherodactylus intermedius and E. tetajulia also differs from E. beguei sp. nov in having conspicuously reticulated throats, bellies and legs. Eleutherodactylus beguei sp. nov has a very swollen and subtriangular musculus submentalis, which is inconspicuous and flat in the stocky species (E. intermedius and E. tetajulia).

Eleutherodactylus beguei sp. nov is very similar to E. feichtingeri and E. varleyi by sharing: (1) small size; (2) pale belly and ventral surface of legs; (3) partially areolate venter; (4) dorsolateral rows of enlarged tubercles; (5) a black stripe crossing the supratympanic fold, surrounding a lower highlighted glandular area; (6) small digital discs; and (7) accentuated polychromatism. It differs from E. feichtingeri by having: (1) a smaller adult size (15.2 mm versus 17.4 mm SVL in E. feichtingeri); (2) larger tympanum (17–34% of head length in E. beguei sp. nov vs. 8–15% in E. feichtingeri); (3) reduced vocal sac when fully distended (vs. a large, hemispherical vocal sac distended onto belly in E. feichtingeri); and (4) distinct vocalizations typically consisting of one-note chirp calls with an inverted V-shaped frequency pattern of modulation (versus a metallic call, with steeply ascending frequency, in E. feichtingeri). Eleutherodactylus beguei sp. nov is more similar to E. varleyi (nearest known population of this species is ~300 km in straight-line) in the tympanum size, but differs from it by having: (1) a shorter distance between vomerine odontophores and the tip of snout (22–25% of head length in E. beguei sp. nov and 28–32% in E. varleyi) and, when mouth is open, head in E. beguei sp. nov looks more rounded than in E. varleyi (Fig. 2); (2) a very small vocal pouch during call emissions (vs. a well-evident hemispherical vocal sac in E. varleyi), that does not fold the gular area when deflated (versus folds the gular area in males of E. varleyi; Fig. 3); and (3) different one-note advertisement calls (versus usually two notes in E. varleyi).
Description. Head as wide as long, its length 91–100% (\(\bar{x} = 98\%\)) of SVL; snout subacuminate in dorsal view and in profile, slightly overlapping the lower jaw; snout length 34–42% (\(\bar{x} = 38\%\)) of head length; nostrils suboval, not protuberant, directed laterally, and separated by a distance equivalent to 21–24% (\(\bar{x} = 23\%\)) of head width; canthus rostralis straight in dorsal view, and rounded in profile; loreal region gradually slopping to the labial border; lips not flared; interorbital distance 1.2–1.8 (\(\bar{x} = 1.5\)) times the upper eyelid width, without enlarged tubercles; eyelid skin with few small granules; loreal area smooth; tympanum superficial, rounded, with distinct annulus, 43–59% (\(\bar{x} = 52\%\)) of eye diameter, separated from

![Fig.1. Three related species of Cuban frogs of the genus *Eleutherodactylus*. A-B: *E. beguei* sp. nov; (A) adult male (paratype MNHNCu 1262) with striped pattern; (B) adult male (paratype MNHNCu 1265) with a marbled pattern. (C) *E. feichtingeri* (adult male MNHNCu 1280), from La Munición, Yateras, Guantánamo Province. (D) *E. varleyi* (MNHNCu 1230), from the vicinity of Paso de Lesca, Sierra de Cubitas, Camagüey Province. Photos: Luis M. Díaz.]
Fig. 2. Distance between vomerine odontophores and the snout tip in: (A) *E. varleyi* (male LMD 251) adult male from Jardín Botánico de Soledad, Cienfuegos; and (B) *E. beguei* sp. nov (paratype male MNHNCu 1263).

Fig. 3. Degree of gular folding as a result of the vocal sac development in males of three closely related Cuban frogs. (A) *E. beguei* sp. nov (paratype male MNHNCu 1266), (B) *E. varleyi* (male LMD 241), from Jardín Botánico de Cienfuegos, (C) *E. feichtingeri* (male MNHNCu 1280), from La Munición, Yateras. Photos: Luis M. Díaz.

Fig. 4. Two conditions in the shape of digital discs. (A) *E. beguei* sp. nov (paratype male MNHNCu 1264), with pointed discs. (B) *E. feichtingeri* (male MNHNCu 1280), with rounded discs. Both photographs were taken of live individuals. Photos: Luis M. Díaz.
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eye by a distance equivalent to 0.2–0.7 (x̅=0.4) times its own diameter; supratympanic fold distinct; 1 to 6 large postrictal tubercles with glandular features and, when numerous, often one is very enlarged; choanae equivalent in size to the third finger disc diameter, oval, partially overlapped by palatal shelf of the maxillary arch; vomerine odontophores moderate in size, slightly arched, separated from each other by a distance equivalent to 15% of their length, surpassing (in 67% of sample) or not the external margins of choanae; tongue suboval, its posterior half not adherent to floor of mouth; external vocal sac of males very small.

Dorsal skin with granules and tubercles, many of which are arranged in dorsolateral rows. Flanks areolate. Supraaxillary, postfemoral, and inguinal glands present, but variably evident; inguinal glands round shaped, and commonly highlighted in yellow. Venter partially areolate, except on chest and throat; anal opening not extended in sheath; inner part of thigh areolate. Palmar tubercle oval, smooth, 1.5 to 2 times longer than thenar tubercle; supernumerary palmar tubercles scarce and enlarged; subarticular tubercles of fingers oval, not very prominent, and rounded in profile. Finger length order: III > IV > II > I; digital discs small, pointed; the third finger disc diameter 16–31% (x̅=25%) of tympanum width; discs are larger in the two outer fingers than on inner ones. Heels without enlarged tubercles; inner metatarsal tubercle narrow and smooth, the same length or 1.4 times longer than the slightly conical outer metatarsal tubercle; supernumerary tubercles flat, scarce, and inconspicuous; subarticular tubercles oval to slightly conical, moderately projected in profile. Toes without defined lateral ridges or basal webbing; circumferential groove bordering the distal half of toe pad; heels touching or barely overlapping each other when flexed legs are held at right angles to sagittal plane; toes length order: IV > III > V > II > I. Hand length 18–21% (x̅=19%) of SVL; foot length 38–41% (x̅=40%) of SVL; thigh length 35–42% (x̅=39%) of SVL; shank length 40–45% (x̅=43%) of SVL; tarsal length 26–28% (x̅=27%) of SVL. Measurements are summarized in Table 1.

**Color in alcohol:** Overall coloration turns gray to gray-brown. All yellow, green, and red pigments disappeared, but patterns remain.

**Color in life:** Overall coloration gray-brown to reddish brown, sometimes with a greenish cast. Most individuals (MNHN Cu 1263–65, 1269) have small vermiculations or marbleing on head, dorsum and hind legs. A dark brown sacral area is usually evident, as well as a dark supra-scapular chevron. Groins yellow. Forearms with a yellowish tone. Some frogs (MNHN Cu 1262, 1266–68) with cream to slightly orange dorsolateral stripes. One individual with two wide paravertebral pale stripes. Supratympanic stripe black, having a sharp contrast with an underlying, and conspicuous, pale zone. Two enlarged, somewhat diffuse, dark suprainguinal patches. Legs with fragmented or vaguely evident bands.

**Advertisement calls.** The call of *Eleutherodactylus beguei* sp. nov typically consists of a short, one-note, call (65% of all sampled calls) that sounds like a chirp. Less frequently, it is a two-note (31%) or three- or four-note call (4%). Three males were recorded and their vocalizations were analyzed. One-note calls commonly increase and decrease sharply in frequency (inverted V). Calls are uttered at a low rate (3–7 calls/minute) with a duration of 19–26 milliseconds (x̅=22, n=30). In each call, the maximum amplitude is gradually reached in 6–13 milliseconds (x̅=10 milliseconds), which is normally the middle part (31–59%) of each signal. The interval between calls is 12.7–21.1 seconds (x̅=17.7 seconds, n=30) and the dominant frequency is 3.5–3.9 kHz (x̅= 3.7 kHz, n=30). In the two-note calls (n=9), the first note has a duration of 22–28 milliseconds (x̅=25), and the second one 19–30 milliseconds (x̅=24).
Table 1. Morphological measurements (mm) of *Eleutherodactylus beguei* sp. nov., *E. feichtingeri*, and *E. varleyi*. Values are means and ranges (in parentheses).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><em>E. beguei</em> n. sp.</th>
<th><em>E. feichtingeri</em></th>
<th><em>E. varleyi</em></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males N=40</td>
<td>Female N=1</td>
<td>Holotype</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snout-vent length</td>
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<td>Head length</td>
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<td>Head width</td>
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<td>Snout length</td>
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<td>2.0</td>
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<td>Upper eyelid width</td>
<td>1.0 (0.9–1.2)</td>
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<td>Interocular distance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internarial distance</td>
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<td>Tympanum width</td>
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<td>Tympanum height</td>
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<td>Shank length</td>
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<td>Eye diameter</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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<td>Eye-naris distance</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
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<td>Finger disc (III) width</td>
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<td>Toe disc (IV) width</td>
<td>0.2 (0.1–0.3)</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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Fig. 5. Oscillograms (above) and sonograms (below) of the most-frequently produced advertisement calls of three closely related species. Sonograms were generated with a Fast Fourier Transform (FFT) of 512 points, using Hanning windows. (A) Single note call of *Eleutherodactylus beguei* sp. nov., type locality, air temperature 23°C. (B) *E. feichtingeri*, Gran Piedra, Santiago de Cuba, 20.6°C. (C) *E. varleyi*, Jardín Botánico Nacional, La Habana, 21.4°C.
Fig. 6. Phylogenetic tree constructed from DNA sequences of the mitochondrial Cyt-b gene, using maximum likelihood. Bootstrap support values are indicated on nodes. Genetic sample accession numbers (SBH) are also provided for each individual. *Eleutherodactylus planirostris* was taken as outgroup species.
The note interval is 222–1146 milliseconds (\(\bar{x}\)=623 milliseconds). The first note dominant frequency is 3.2–5.1 kHz (\(\bar{x}\)=3.8 kHz) and the second note dominant frequency is 3.5–4.4 kHz (\(\bar{x}\)= 3.7 kHz). The two-note calls also have an inverted V-shape or decline in frequency. Calls were recorded at a temperature of 23–24°C and relative humidity of 85%.

**Molecular phylogeny.** The tree obtained from the Cyt-b sequences (Fig. 6) shows that *E. beguei* sp. nov, *E. feichtingeri* and *E. varleyi* form three different clades that support the genetic recognition of the new species.

**Holotype.** MNHNCu 1261, adult male from the pine forests of La Munición (20º24'06''N, 75º02'14''W), Humboldt National Park, Municipality of Yateras, Guantánamo Province, 678 m, collected 24 July 2011 by Luis M. Díaz and Gerardo Begué.

**Paratypes.** Paratopotype males (n=7): MNHNCu 1262–1268; female (n=1): MNHNCu 1269. Collected 24–26 July 2011, by the same collectors. SBH 191127, 2 km north of La Munición, Municipality of Yateras, Guantánamo Province, 730 m, collected 22 June 1990 by S. Blair Hedges.

**Distribution.** *Eleutherodactylus beguei* sp. nov is only known from the vicinity of La Munición, in the southwestern limit of the Humboldt National Park, Municipality of Yateras, Guantánamo Province, Cuba, but it may have a wider distribution on the Meseta del Guaso and elsewhere.

**Etymology.** We take pleasure in naming this new species after Gerardo Begué Quiala, one of the most outstanding specialists on the biodiversity of the Humboldt National Park and longtime enthusiastic collaborator.

**Natural History.** The type-locality of *E. beguei* sp. nov is in a region of pine (*Pinus caribaea*) forests (Fig. 8). Males were found sporadically calling from 2200 to 0300 hours in each of the two collecting nights (24–26 July 2011). Vocalizing individuals were located: (1) on the ground, (2) on horizontal leaf of a small bush about 30 cm above ground (Fig. 8A), (3) 1.2 m height in the forked branch of a small bush, (4) on a fallen trunk about 5 cm in diameter (Fig. 8B), and (5) hidden among dense pine needles of fallen branches. Once we obtained recordings of the male’s calls, other males were easily located because they responded to playbacks.
A gravid female (MNHNCu 1269) was found about 25 cm from a calling male (MNHNCu 1263) on the ground, as she emitted soft reciprocation chirping calls (Fig. 9). Only one female call was recorded with adequate quality for analysis: duration 16 milliseconds; dominant frequency 2.9 kHz. The female call has two well-defined harmonics (at 5.9 and 8.9 kHz), and is similar to male calls in having the inverted V-shaped frequency pattern. Male and female were placed in a collecting container and five hours later they were found in axillary amplexus and surrounded by 9 ivory white eggs (lot MNHNCu 1270) of 3.5–3.7 mm in diameter (Fig. 8C). One fully yolked egg remained inside the female, preserved before laying it, giving a clutch size of 10 for that individual.

DISCUSSION

The discovery of *E. beguei* sp. nov. increases to six the number of species within the *E. gundlachi* species group (*sensu* Hedges *et al.*, 2008). However, recent evidences (SBH in preparation) suggest changes in the former classification, because *E. gundlachi* is actually related to the *E. lutolus* species group. Therefore, the recognition of an *E. varleyi* species group is valid to include *E. beguei* sp. nov, *E. feichtingeri, E. varleyi, E. intermedius* and *E. tetajulia* based on the available genetic and/or morphological data. Rodríguez *et al.* (2011) stated that *E. adelus*, another grass frog previously placed in the *E. gundlachi* species group based on shared morphological traits with *E. varleyi*, is genetically close to *E. pezopetrus*, a big rock-dwelling frog and the only member of the *E. pezopetrus* species group following the classification of Hedges *et al.* (2008). Very divergent morphologies have evolved among phylogenetically related species, or convergences occur between more distant lineages. This situation made the taxonomy of this genus very confused until recent reviews using DNA sequences (Hedges *et al.*, 2008). But even with the most advanced tools, methodological mistakes yield contradictory results.

There are characters other than those mentioned in the diagnosis of *Eleutherodactylus beguei* sp. nov that show interesting tendencies but overlap among species or are difficult to measure in a useful way. For example, post-femoral glands tend to be more conspicuously swollen and highlighted in coloration in *E. varleyi* than in *E. beguei* sp. nov, in which they are only vaguely evident. The marbling pattern of *E. beguei* sp. nov (Fig. 1) has not been observed to be as accentuated in any known population of *E. varleyi* or *E. feichtingeri*. *Eleutherodactylus feichtingeri* and *E. varleyi* have a black bar running along the inner side of arms, but this pattern is usually less conspicuous, fragmented, or even absent in *E. beguei* sp. nov. Besides the herein showed photographs of *E. beguei* sp. nov, a color photo of this species already was published as "*Eleutherodactylus varleyi*" (Hedges *et al.*, 2008: fig. 68).

Vocalizations of *Eleutherodactylus beguei* sp. nov are clearly different from those of *E. varleyi* and *E. feichtingeri* (see Díaz *et al.*, 2012). Calls of *E. beguei* sp. nov are somewhat similar to those of other distantly related species of the subgenus *Euhyas*, such as *E. zugi* and *E. klinikowskii* (see Díaz and Cádiz, 2008). Sonograms and bioacoustical data of the advertisement calls of *E. feichtingeri* and *E. varleyi* (see Fig. 5B and C) have been used repeatedly to differentiate among species by Díaz *et al.* (2003; 2012) and Díaz and Cádiz (2008). A direct reference to species sound recordings is available in Díaz and Cádiz (2008). We were unable to measure call intensity in the field but, definitely, the typical single-noted advertisement calls of *E. feichtingeri* are distinctively louder and metallic, and can be heard from a greater distance (more than 50 meters), than the soft calls of *E. beguei* sp. nov, which are difficult to hear from 10 meters. During observations in the wild, *E. feichtingeri* at La Munición was calling at a very
higher rate (in the range of 21–42 calls per minute; Díaz et al., 2003, 2012) than E. beguei sp. nov, under the same weather conditions. This represents a substantial difference between the species, especially as data for both were collected during breeding activity. Additionally, there is a strong tendency in E. feichtingeri to reach maximum call amplitude at the beginning of each signal (first 7–50%, x=16.6%; Díaz et al., 2012), whereas in E. beguei sp. nov that point is attained at 31–59% (x=49%) of call duration. Eleutherodactylus varleyi also has a higher call rate (17–35 calls per minute; Díaz et al., 2003) than E. beguei sp. nov. In the typical two-note calls of E. varleyi, notes are spaced at 118–217 millisecond intervals (Díaz et al., 2003), whereas in the less-frequently emitted two-note calls of E. beguei sp. nov this interval is two to five times longer. Dominant frequency of calls is similar in E. beguei and E. feichtingeri, but emissions tend to be higher pitched in E. varleyi (mean values usually 4.5 to 5.6 kHz in most populations; Díaz et al., 2003, 2012; Cádiz, 2008). Our findings of vocal variation are not likely to be influenced by temperature differences, because we recorded most calls of E. beguei sp. nov., E. feichtingeri and E. varleyi within a similar thermal range.

Estrada (1987) and Díaz et al. (2003) reported clutch sizes of 3 and 4 eggs for Eleutherodactylus varleyi and E. adelus, respectively. Small clutch sizes, of 5–6 eggs, were also reported by Estrada (1992) and Estrada and Hedges (1996) for E. intermedius and E. tetajulia. However, the clutch size of E. beguei sp. nov exceeds this number, which is quite unexpected considering

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**Fig. 8.** Eleutherodactylus beguei sp. nov (A) Paratype male MNHNCu 1268, perching on horizontal leaf from which it was calling. (B) Paratype male MNHNCu 1267, calling from the bifurcation of a fallen branch. (C) Amplecting pair inside a small transporting container (paratype male MNHNCu 1263 and female MNHNCu 1269) with just-laid eggs. (D) Pine forest, with ferns, shrubs and grasses, at the type locality in La Munición, Yateras, Guantánamo, Cuba.
the small size of the adult female and the diameter of eggs. The female’s call before ovoposition is quite unusual in anurans, and was first reported for Cuban species in *E. guanahacabibes* (Díaz and Estrada, 2000). This behavior might be widespread in other *Eubryas*.

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REFERENCES


**APPENDIX I. Specimens examined for comparisons**

*Eleutherodactylus varleyi* (N=119).— **Pinar del Río Province:** LMD 231, 232, 240–245, Loma del Espejo, Alturas de Pizarras del Sur, km 41 Carretera de Luis Lazo; MNHNCu 613, Cueva Cheta, Majagua Canteras; LMD 432, Mil Cumbres, Sierra del Rosario; AMNH 59834, 4.4 mi NW San Vicente; AMNH 61937–44, 5.6 mi NW San Vicente. **Artemisa Province:** MNHNCu 1233–1234, and MFP 11521–11523, Estación Ecológica Las Terrazas, Sierra del Rosario; MNHNCu 1239, Río Bayate, Reserva de la Biosfera Sierra del Rosario, Sierra del Rosario. MNHNCu 1235–1236, Campismo La Chorrera, Artemisa. **La Habana Province:** CZACC jar 309 (a single specimen without number), Atabey, Playa. **Mayabeque Province:** MNHNCu 250, Madruga; LMD 276–278, Peñas Blancas; MNHNCu 1237–1238, Boca de Canasí, Santa Cruz del Norte. **Isla de la Juventud:** CZACC jar 311 (18 specimens without individual numbers), Hotel Colony, Siguanea; AMNHN 63292–63308, Nueva Gerona. **Villa Clara Province:** LMD 247–248, Placetas; AMNH 61950, 8 mi S Manicaragua; MNHNCu 1235–1236, Cayo Alto, Reserva Ecológica Sabanas de Santa Clara, Santa Clara. **Cienfuegos Province:** LMD 251–269, Jardín Botánico de Cienfuegos; MCZ 10601 (Holotype), Soledad (=Jardín Botánico de Cienfuegos); AMNH 92430–92453, Soledad (=Jardín Botánico de Cienfuegos). **Camagüey Province:** MNHNCu 1230–1232, Paso de Lesca, Sierra de Cubitas.