

Herpetological Field Guide
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Introduction

Dominica is home to a large array of herpetological fauna. Four frogs, seven lizards, four (possibly five) snakes, four sea turtles, and one tortoise. When researching for our Study Abroad trip to Dominica, we discovered that the information on the reptiles and amphibians were sketchy at best. Descriptions were inadequate and almost no pictures were found. We decided to compile a field guide that pictures and describes all the herp fauna on the island.

Materials and Methods

Together we searched areas known to hold species of amphibians and reptiles. This information of areas was gathered from existing materials, interviews with Dr. Dixon before leaving College Station, and guidance from Dr. Woolley and Dr. Lacher. Upon entering these areas, systematic searches through brush and other habitats were conducted and the herps were then gathered by hand.

Family Colubridae

Liophis juliae

Common Name: Kouwes sayga

Small snake reaching up to 600mm in length. Coloration is black with white speckling along the length of its body. Another distinguishing mark is the ocular band that starts at the back of the eye. When disturbed it uses a characteristic "whipping" action to escape. It was often found to inhabit undergrowth in dry forest climates. Lesser Antillean endemic.

Alsophis antillensis

Common Name: Kouwes nwe

Common throughout dominica. Coloration is mostly black with white spots that may extend the length of the body or join together to form stripes. Length can reach up to 1.3m. Lesser Antillean endemic.

Clelia clelia

Common Name: False boa

May be a melonic form of boa. Has been rummored to exist on the island, although exact whereabouts of existence are unknown. It's coloration is red and black, and length can reach up to 2.5m.

Family Boidae

Boa constrictor nebulosus

Common Name: Clouded Boa

Large brown snake with dark and light blotches along body. Found throughout Dominica, and is frequently seen on roads at night. It's length can reach up to 3m.

Family Typhlopidae

Typhlops dominicana

Common Name: Worm Snake

Fossorial ground snake with a glossy black coloration. It is worm-like and reaches up to 385mm in length. Often found around cultivation and on concrete after rains. Dominican endemic.

Family Leptodactylidae

Leptodactylus fallax

Common Name: Mountain Chicken

Large frog with black spots, peach sides and leopard pattern under legs. Snout to vent length can reach 121mm, with legs being just as long. Low to middle elevation on west side of the island. They are territorial, and are a food staple for many Dominicans. Lesser Antillean endemic.

Eleutherodactylus johnstonei

Common Name: Johnstone's Whistling Frog

Introduced in 1979. Variable coloration, found in higher elevations and is wide spread throughout the island. One chevron with no ocular band or middorsal line. No red on hindlimbs or groin. Average snout to vent length is 35mm.

Eleutherodactylus martinicensis

Common Name: Tink Frog

Variable coloration, dark interocular band, pale middorsal line, and two dorsal chevrons. Often red on hind limbs and groin. On average is larger than *E. johnstonei*. Found in middle elevation and is wide spread throughout the island. Lesser Antillean endemic.

Eleutherodactylus amplinympha

Common Name: Gounouj

Recently described in 1994. No known picture. Found in high elevations in Morne Micotrin, Morne Trois Pitons, and Morne Diablotin. Snout to vent length reaches up to 47mm.

Family Testudinidae

Geochelone carbonaria

Common Name: Red footed Tortoise

A feral population has been rumored to occur in the area surrounding Woodford Hill, and a captive population in Canefield. Distinguishing characteristics are a dark shell with yellow centers on each plate. Legs have scattered red scales. They were thought to have been introduced by European settlers who kept them as pets. The length can reach up to 512mm.

Family Cheloniidae

Chelonia mydas

Common Name: Green Sea Turtle

Dark olive brown or grey with white undersides. Reach up to 1.2m in length. Seen nesting on beaches on the North end of the island.

Eretmochelys imbricata

Common Name: Hawksbill Sea Turtle

Gets it's name from the shape of it's bill which is hooked at the end. It's shell is red/yellow/brown, tortoise shell pattern that is shiny. Reaches up to 1m in length.

Caretta caretta

Common Name: Loggerhead Sea Turtle

Reddish/brown shell color. Very rare, mainly in bays within Martinique and Guadeloupe. Not reported nesting in Dominica. Can reach 1.5m in length.

Family Dermochelyidae

Dermochelys coriacea

Common Name: Leatherback Sea Turtle

Black soft leather shell with white scales that pattern themselves into thin white lines. Pattern is most distinct in hatchlings. Recorded mainly around Martinique and Guadeloupe Channels. Nest between April and June. Largest of all sea turtles, reaches up to 2.5m in length.

Family Gekkonidae

Hemidactylus mabouia

Common Name: House Gecko

Introduced from West Africa. Can be found around houses, hence the common name. Small in size, around a 68mm snout to vent length.

Thecadactylus rapicauda

Common Name: Tree Gecko

Common in coastal vegetation and human environment. Very large, snout to vent length is up to 121mm. Coloration is light grey to dark brown and has a dark and light brown speckle pattern. Tail is very thick and stubby.

Three small geckos in the genus *Sphaerodactylus* occur in Dominica. *s. vincenti* (Snout to vent length 29mm), *S. fantasticus* (Snout to vent 34mm), *S. microlepis* (Snout to vent length 40mm). Current status on the island is uncertain, but *S. vincenti* and *S. fantasticus* were once spotted in the dry forest of the west coast.

Family Iguanidae

Iguana delicatissima

Common Name: Lesser Antillean Iguana

Coloration can be bright green or brown. It can be found in dry forests, although some have been spotted in the Syndicate area. A small population also exists around the Hummingbird Inn. They get very large with a snout to vent length up to 400mm and a tail that is equally long. Lesser Antillean endemic.

Anolis oculatus

Common Name: Anole or Tree lizard

Abundant throughout the island. Color patterns and colors vary from black/brown to yellow/grey. Males display a bright orange/yellow dulap under throat. Snout to vent length up to 98mm with a long tail.

Family Teiidae

Ameiva fuscata

Common Name: Ground Lizard

Color ranges from brown/grey/green in smaller lizards, to Blue/Black in larger ones. Common in the dry forests and shrubby areas under 300m of elevation.

Gymnophthalmus pleei

Once spotted in 1980. Current status is unknown. Maximum length is up to 48mm.

Family Scincidae

Mabuya mabouya

Common Name: Skink

Bronze/copper color along back, with black and light tan stripes along sides down length of body. Cylindrical body shape with very shiny scales. Introduced from Africa. Very common in dry forests and scrub grass. Snout to vent length up to 93mm.

The following sources were used to identify the amphibians and reptiles for this project.

Evans, Peter G.H. and Arlington James. Dominica, Nature Island of the Caribbean Wildlife Checklists. Sussex: Faygate Printing, 1997.