

Scientific note

New distribution records of the gecko *Paroedura stellata* Hawlitschek & Glaw, 2012, endemic to Mayotte Island

(Squamata, Gekkonidae)

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Mayotte is one of the four islands of the Comoros Archipelago in the Western Indian Ocean. Like many fully oceanic islands it is inhabited by a variety of endemic species, among them the nocturnal gecko *Paroedura stellata*. Historically considered conspecific with *P. sanctijohannis*, a species endemic to the other islands of the archipelago, it later remained undetected on Mayotte for a long time (Meirte 2004). It was rediscovered in 2008 (Hawlitschek et al. 2011) and described as a new species in Hawlitschek & Glaw (2013) after finding it more closely related to Malagasy species than to its Comoran congener.

Paroedura stellata is restricted to humid, mesic, and dry forests, which are rare and fragmented on the densely populated island. Previous publications recorded the species only from localities in the southern part of the island despite intensive surveys in the North, posing the question of why the species would be absent from some patches of suitable habitat. Surveys in 2013 yielded new records in the Bungundranavi (-12.9199/45.0875), Hajangua (-12.8617/45.1945), and Tsararano (-12.8799/45.1547) regions, in the northern forests of Combani (-12.8035/45.1546), Crêtes du Nord (-12.7119/45.0647) and Majimbini (-12.7671/45.1904), and in a *Pandanus* stand on the small and highly degraded island of Petite Terre (-12.7713/45.2850). Now *P. stellata* is known to occur in most significant patches of suitable habitat in the island. Nevertheless, the population is highly fragmented, and the total area

of occupancy remains restricted to ca. 25 km². Therefore, the national Red List status of 'Vulnerable' should be maintained (IUCN France & MNHN 2014).

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References

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Fig. 1. *Paroedura stellata* Hawlitschek & Glaw, 2012 from Majimbini forest, Mayotte Island (left). Map of Mayotte showing the distribution of *P. stellata*, with new localities in red (right).

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