



A new *Pristimantis* (Anura, Terrarana, Strabomantidae) from Churi-tepui in the Chimanta massif, Venezuelan Guayana

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Abstract

A new species of the genus *Pristimantis* is described from Churi tepui, in the Chimanta massif, Estado Bolívar, Venezuela. The new species was discovered during the Muchimuk Expedition 2009, an ongoing speleological exploration of the Charles Brewer cave system, the largest sandstone cave on Earth. The species is known from only one female, collected near the mouth of the Muchimuk cave, in “non-gramineous tubiform meadows”. The new species can be distinguished from other *Pristimantis* on the highlands of the Guiana Shield by its unique coloration, indistinct tympanum, dorsal and ventral skin smooth, well-developed lateral fringes on the fingers and toes, and basal webbing on Toes III–V.

Key words: *Pristimantis*, new species, Guiana Shield, Venezuela, tepui, Chimanta massif

Resumen

Se describe una nueva especie del género *Pristimantis* del tepuy Churi, en el macizo del Chimantá, estado Bolívar, Venezuela. La nueva especie fue descubierta durante la Expedición Muchimuk 2009, una exploración espeleológica del sistema de cuevas Charles Brewer, que conforma el sistema en arenisca más voluminoso del planeta. La especie se conoce solamente por una hembra, que se hallaba cerca de la boca de la cueva Muchimuk, sobre el hábitat “herbazal tubiforme no-gramíneos”. La nueva especie puede distinguirse de otros *Pristimantis* de zonas altas y medias del Escudo de la Guayana por su coloración única, tímpano indistinto, piel dorsal y ventral lisa, dedos de pies y manos con quillas laterales bien desarrolladas, y membrana basal en dedos del pie III al V.

Introduction

In recent years, a major event in cave exploration was the discovery of the Charles Brewer cave system in Churi-tepui, part of the Chimanta massif. Since its discovery in 2004 (Smida et al. 2004, 2005; Brewer-Carías 2005; Chacón et al. 2006), more than 23 km of subterranean galleries have been mapped; to date this is the largest sandstone cave system in the world (Marek Audy, pers. comm; to be published). Aspects of the herpetofauna of Chimanta have been treated by Roze (1958), Gorzula (1988, 1992), Ayarzagüena et al. (1992), Señaris et al. (1996) Gorzula & Señaris (1999), and revisited by McDiarmid & Donnelly (2005). During several expeditions from 2004 to 2009, a few specimens of reptiles and amphibians were observed or collected (Barrio-Amorós, unpublished data), including little known species such as *Stefania ginesi*, *Allobates rufulus*, *Tepuihyla edelcae*, *Anadia* sp. (Gorzula 1992), *Arthrosaura* sp. nov., *Thamnodynastes chimanta*, *Anolis carlostoddi*, and a new species of *Pristimantis*, which we describe herein.