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A lost species or the loss of stripes? The case of *Contomastix* lizards from Cabo Polonio, Uruguay, with observations on *C. lacertoides* (Duméril & Bibron) and *Cnemidophorus grandensis* Cope (Squamata, Teiidae)

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Abstract

The main goal of this manuscript is the reevaluation of the taxonomic status of the teiid lizard *Contomastix charrua*, known only from Cabo Polonio, a small coastal rocky outcrop in southeastern Uruguay. This species was erected on the basis of the presence of a second pair of ceratobranchials and longer cornua in the hyoid bone, in addition to a reduced expression of the pattern of coloration as compared with *C. lacertoides*. Nevertheless, we found that both species have indistinguishable hyoid morphology, bearing *C. lacertoides* a noticeable second pair of ceratobranchials. Besides, we realized that the pattern of coloration in this species is more variable than previously considered. As a result of the present work, *C. charrua* is included in the synonymy of *C. lacertoides*. In addition, we provide some observations on the holotype of *Cnemidophorus grandensis*, a junior synonym of *C. lacertoides*.

Key words: whiptail lizards, hyoid bone, color morph

Introduction

The lizard Family Teiidae is widely distributed in the New World, from United States to southern Argentina and Uruguay (Harvey *et al.* 2012). It contains several species currently arranged in three subfamilies, Callopiistinae, Teiinae and Tupinambinae, see Harvey *et al.* (2012) for recent taxonomic review. Many teiid taxa present a controversial taxonomic history given the morphological resemblance of many species and the variation of the pattern of coloration (Cope 1892a; Reeder *et al.* 2002). These polymorphic lizards present conspicuous, usually striped patterns of coloration, and may also exhibit sexual color dimorphism (*i.e.* Duellman & Zweifel 1962; Vitt 1983; Ugueto *et al.* 2009; Arias *et al.* 2011).

The taxonomic instability of teiids can be well exemplified with *Cnemidophorus lacertoides* Duméril and Bibron, described based on material from Montevideo, southern Uruguay (Duméril & Bibron 1839). Its placement within Teiinae was controversial (Reeder *et al.* 2002), being assigned by different authors either to *Ameiva* or to *Cnemidophorus* (*i.e.* Burt 1931; Milstead 1961; Presch 1974; Cole *et al.* 1979). Boulenger (1896) included in the synonymy of *Cn. lacertoides* the species *Cn. grandensis* described by Cope (1869) from Brazil. The name *Cn. lacertoides* was then applied to populations throughout a wide geographic range in Argentina, southern Brazil and Uruguay. Peters and Donoso-Barros (1970) considered the northwestern Argentinean species *Cn. leachei* Peracca under the synonymy of *Cn. lacertoides*. This species was later resurrected by Cei and Scrocchi (1991). Meanwhile, some *Cn. lacertoides* populations from Córdoba in central Argentina, were described as *Cn. serranus* Cei and