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## A new species of porcupine, genus *Coendou* (Rodentia: Erethizontidae) from the Atlantic forest of northeastern Brazil

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### Abstract

We report the discovery of a new species of *Coendou* (Rodentia, Erethizontidae), here designated *Coendou speratus* **sp. nov.** This small porcupine, locally known as *coandu-mirim*, is found in the Pernambuco Endemism Centre in the Atlantic coast of northeastern Brazil north of the São Francisco river, one of the most important known biodiversity hotspots. The geographic range of *C. speratus* overlaps with that of the larger, widespread *C. prehensilis*, but not with that of *C. insidiosus* from the southeastern Atlantic forest, nor with that of *C. nycthemera*, an eastern Amazonian species. *Coendou speratus* is a small-bodied, long-tailed species that appears to be completely spiny because it lacks long dorsal fur. The dorsal quills have conspicuously brownish red tips that contrast with the blackish dorsal background color. The new species is overall similar to *C. nycthemera*, but the dorsal body quills are typically tricolored in the former and bicolored in the latter. The new species is externally very distinct from *C. insidiosus*, especially because the latter has bicolored dorsal quills that are almost completely hidden beneath longer and homogeneous pale or dark hairs.

**Key words:** Biodiversity hotspot, *Coendou*, Mammalia, Neotropics, taxonomy

### Introduction

The Brazilian Atlantic forest is considered a world priority for biodiversity conservation and the fourth most important hotspot of the planet (Myers *et al.* 2000). The Pernambuco Endemism Centre, a biogeographical unit of the Brazilian Atlantic forest that lies north of the São Francisco river, harbors several endemic species, which suggests that it is a hotspot within a hotspot (Punde *et al.* 2008; Carnaval *et al.* 2009). Unfortunately, this region has so far lost 98% of its natural forest cover (Viana *et al.* 1997).

New World porcupines (Rodentia: Erethizontidae) are small- to medium-sized arboreal rodents that feed on immature seeds, green or ripe fruit, palm nuts, bark and leaves (Emmons & Feer 1997; Lima *et al.* 2010; Passamani 2010). They currently comprise 15 species (Voss 2011), belonging to at least three genera (*Coendou*, *Erethizon*, *Chaetomys*), depending on the author. Some authors recognize the hairy *Sphiggurus* as distinct from the spiny *Coendou* (e.g., Husson 1978; Eisenberg & Redford 1999; Nowak 1999; Bonvicino *et al.* 2002; Woods & Kilpatrick 2005), whereas others consider *Sphiggurus* a junior synonym of *Coendou* (e.g., Handley & Pine 1992; Emmons & Feer 1997; McKenna & Bell 1997; Voss & Angermann 1997; Voss 2011), arguing that they cannot be meaningfully diagnosed as separate taxa. Here we follow this latter view. The number of species of Neotropical erethizontids is still tentative, since species limits are poorly defined (Voss 2011), the application of some old names is uncertain (Leite *et al.* 2011), and new species have been recently described (Voss & Silva 2001). The new species described