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Nota editorial

Biodiversidade em transformação

A presente edição da *Zoologia Caboverdiana* evidencia, mais uma vez, a notável riqueza biológica do arquipélago de Cabo Verde, bem como os rápidos processos de mudança que marcam a fauna marinha e terrestre. Os três contributos aqui reunidos ilustram particularmente bem esta dualidade entre singularidade natural, lacunas de conhecimento e sinais claros de transformação ecológica em curso.

No primeiro artigo é documentado o primeiro caso de pigmentação anómala em cetáceos para a Macaronésia, referente a um golfinho-de-dentes-rugosos com falta de pigmentação. A publicação intitulada de “*Pigmentação anómala em golfinhos-de-dentes-rugosos (Steno bredanensis) de Cabo Verde: primeiro relato na região da Macaronésia*” destaca que um indivíduo provavelmente é portador de leucismo ou piebaldismo. Este caso constitui o segundo conhecido para a espécie em todo o continente africano. Para além do valor descritivo, o trabalho discute as implicações ecológicas deste fenómeno raro e sublinha a baixíssima prevalência entre populações de golfinhos. Chama ainda a atenção para a importância de programas continuados de foto-identificação e monitorização de longo prazo.

O segundo contributo é uma nota breve intitulada “*O escaravelho Pinoplanus aegyptius (Erichson, 1840) chega à Boavista, Cabo Verde (Coleoptera: Staphylinidae, Paederinae)*”. Esta publicação centra-se na primeira observação registada do bicho-pau egípcio na ilha da Boavista, capturado por meio de armadilhas luminosas nas dunas de Sal Rei. A captura de um macho e duas fêmeas, que foram agora integrados em colecções de referência, confirma a presença da espécie no arquipélago. Também sugere que prospecções

adicionais com métodos semelhantes poderão revelar uma distribuição mais ampla noutras ilhas. Ao mesmo tempo, os autores destacam um ponto crítico: praticamente nada se sabe sobre a ecologia desta espécie. O facto de os registos estarem associados a luz artificial, em habitat dunar, abre questões relevantes sobre uso de habitat, comportamento e potenciais respostas a fontes de luz antropogénicas, reforçando assim a necessidade de estudos ecológicos dirigidos.

A terceira publicação revela um outro registo aparentemente pontual, que chama à atenção para um processo biogeográfico de grande alcance: a ameaça crescente derivada da introdução de espécies exóticas. Na nota breve “*Expansão da área de distribuição da osga doméstica no arquipélago de Cabo Verde: novo registo em São Nicolau*”, as autoras identificaram um juvenil de *Hemidactylus mabouia* dentro de uma residência na Ribeira Brava com base em caracteres morfológicos e moleculares. Os resultados confirmam tratar-se da mesma linhagem já reportada noutras ilhas, suportando a hipótese de uma introdução recente e em expansão no arquipélago. Este resultado, quando considerado conjuntamente com estudos anteriores, alerta para a crescente homogeneização da fauna insular de répteis e para os riscos associados a espécies invasoras em ecossistemas frágeis.

Em conjunto, estes trabalhos evidenciam três mensagens centrais que a *Zoologia Caboverdiana* pretende continuar a valorizar: i) a relevância de registos de ocorrência e de casos singulares (ex: pigmentações anómalas) para compreender padrões de variabilidade natural; ii) a urgência em preencher lacunas básicas de história natural e ecologia de muitos táxones ainda pouco estudados; e iii) a necessidade de integrar abordagens clássicas

(ex: morfologia e observação de campo) com ferramentas modernas (ex: genética, foto-identificação e armadilhas luminosas) na monitorização da biodiversidade cabo-verdiana.

Convidamos a comunidade científica nacional e internacional a ler este número e a continuar a usar a *Zoologia Caboverdiana* como plataforma para divulgar estudos que aprofundem o conhecimento sobre a fauna de Cabo Verde e orientem acções de conservação neste arquipélago singular.

Desejamos, neste fim de ano, que a sociedade global reconheça com urgência a gravidade da crise climática, cuja intensificação de eventos extremos, amplamente discutida nas últimas COP, tem impacto directo sobre a biodiversidade mundial e efeitos particularmente severos em pequenos estados insulares em vias de desenvolvimento como Cabo Verde.

Evandro Lopes
Editor-chefe interino da
Zoologia Caboverdiana

Editorial note

Biodiversity in transformation

This edition of *Zoologia Caboverdiana* once again highlights the remarkable biological richness of the Cabo Verde archipelago, as well as the swift processes of change affecting its marine and terrestrial fauna. The three contributions gathered here illustrate this duality of natural uniqueness, knowledge gaps, and clear signs of ongoing ecological transformation particularly well.

The first article documents the first case of anomalous pigmentation in cetaceans in Macaronesia, concerning a rough-toothed dolphin with pigmentation deficiency. The publication titled “*Anomalous pigmentation in rough-toothed dolphins (Steno bredanensis) from Cabo Verde: first report in the Macaronesia region*” emphasises that one individual probably exhibits leucism or piebaldism. This case represents also only the second known case for the species across the entire African continent. Beyond its descriptive value, the work discusses the ecological implications of this rare phenomenon and underscores its extremely low prevalence among dolphin populations. It also draws attention to the importance of ongoing photo-identification and long-term monitoring programmes.

The second contribution is a brief note entitled “*The beetle Pinoplanus aegyptius (Erichson, 1840) arrives on Boavista, Cabo Verde (Coleoptera: Staphylinidae, Paederinae)*”. This publication focuses on the first recorded sighting of the Egyptian rove beetle on the island of Boavista, which was caught using light traps in the Sal Rei dunes. The capture of one male and two females, which have now been added to reference collections, confirms the presence of this species in the archipelago. It also suggests that a wider distribution on other islands may be

revealed by further surveys using similar methods. At the same time, the authors highlight a critical point: practically nothing is known about the ecology of this species. The fact that the records are associated with artificial light in dune habitats raises relevant questions about habitat use, behaviour, and potential responses to anthropogenic light sources, thereby reinforcing the need for targeted ecological studies.

The third publication reveals another apparently isolated record that sheds light on a widespread biogeographical process: the growing threat posed by the introduction of exotic species. In the short note “*Expansion of the distribution area of the house gecko in the Cabo Verde Archipelago: new record in São Nicolau*” the authors identified a juvenile *Hemidactylus mabouia* inside a residence in Ribeira Brava based on its morphological and molecular characteristics. The results confirm that this belongs to the same lineage as that reported on other islands, which supports the hypothesis of a recent introduction and ongoing expansion in the archipelago. This finding, when considered alongside with previous studies, alerts to the increasing homogenisation of insular reptile fauna and the associated risks of invasive species in fragile ecosystems.

Together, these studies highlight three key messages that *Zoologia Caboverdiana* intends to continue promoting: i) the importance of occurrences records and unique cases (e.g., abnormal pigmentation) in understanding patterns of natural variability; ii) the urgency of addressing fundamental gaps in the natural history and ecology of many taxa that have yet to be studied in depth; and iii) the necessity of integrating classical approaches (e.g., morphology, and field observation) with

modern tools (e.g., genetics, photo-identification, and light traps) when monitoring Cabo Verdean biodiversity.

We invite the national and international scientific community to read this issue and to continue using *Zoologia Caboverdiana* as a platform to disseminate studies that deepen knowledge about Cabo Verdean fauna and guide conservation actions in this unique archipelago.

As we approach the end of the year, we hope that the severity of the climate crisis will be urgently recognised by global society, as the intensification of extreme events, which has been widely discussed at recent COP meetings, has a direct impact on worldwide biodiversity and particularly severe effects on small island developing states like Cabo Verde.

Evandro Lopes
Interim Editor-in-Chief of
Zoologia Caboverdiana



Artigo original | Original article

Anomalous pigmentation in rough-toothed dolphin (*Steno bredanensis*) from Cabo Verde: a first report for the Macaronesian region

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RESUMO

Relatamos o primeiro caso documentado de um cetáceo com pigmentação anómalo na República de Cabo Verde – um golfinho-de-dentes-rugosos (*Steno bredanensis*) com hipopigmentação. Este indivíduo que, provavelmente apresenta leucismo ou piebaldismo, representa o primeiro registo na ecorregião da Macaronésia e é apenas o segundo caso conhecido para esta espécie no continente Africano. Consideramos as implicações ecológicas deste fenómeno raro e destacamos a prevalência notavelmente baixa entre as populações de golfinhos.

Palavras-chave: Atlântico Tropical Oriental, cetáceo, Delphinidae, distúrbio cutâneo, hipopigmentação, variação de cor

ABSTRACT

We report the first documented case of an anomalous pigmented cetacean in the Republic of Cabo Verde – a hypopigmented rough-toothed dolphin (*Steno bredanensis*). This individual, likely exhibiting leucism or piebaldism, represents the first record in the Macaronesia ecoregion, and only the second known case for this species in African waters. We consider the ecological implications of this phenomenon and highlight its notably low prevalence among dolphin populations.

Keywords: Eastern Tropical Atlantic, cetacean, Delphinidae, skin disorder, hypopigmentation, colour variation

INTRODUCTION

Mammalian coloration is predominantly governed by the presence or absence of the pigment melanin within the integumentary structures, including the skin, hair, and eyes (Fertl & Rosel 2009). Various pigmentation anomalies have been documented in mammals (dos Santos *et al.* 2016) encompassing: *i*) albinism – a hereditary disorder characterized by a complete absence of melanin in the eyes, skin, and hair; *ii*) leucism – defined by a reduction in pigmentation that typically results in individuals exhibiting white coloration with normally pigmented eyes; *iii*) melanism – involving an overproduction of melanin, leading to an increased deposition of dark pigmentation; and *iv*) piebaldism – which manifests as localized areas of depigmentation, producing irregular light-coloured patches on an otherwise normally pigmented background (Slominski *et al.* 2004; Acevedo & Aguayo 2008; Acevedo *et al.* 2009; Lodi & Borobia 2013; dos Santos *et al.* 2016; Fertl & Rosel 2009; Methion & López 2019; Lindner 2023).

Reports of atypical colouration in cetaceans are scarce (Fertl *et al.* 1999; Quigley & Flannery 2002; Slominski *et al.* 2004; Acevedo & Aguayo 2008; Acevedo *et al.* 2009; Lodi & Borobia 2013; Hauser-Davis *et al.* 2020; Gazda & Russell 2022; Ortega-Ortiz *et al.* 2022; Lindner 2023). Despite their low frequency of occurrence (Lin *et al.* 2023; Lindner 2023), anomalously white individuals have been documented across a broad range of cetacean taxa globally (Fertl *et al.* 1999, 2004;

Hauser-Davis *et al.* 2020). In the North Atlantic region, such pigmentation anomalies have been reported in several species, including but not limited to *Tursiops truncatus* (Fertl *et al.* 2004), *Delphinus* spp. (Dobbs 1984), *Phocoena phocoena* (Tonay *et al.* 2012; Robinson & Haskins 2013), *Orcinus orca* (Speckman & Sheffield 2001), *Globicephala* spp. (Hain & Leatherwood 1982), *Physeter microcephalus* (Whitehead 1995), *Stenella frontalis* (Fertl *et al.* 1999; dos Santos *et al.* 2016), and *Balaenoptera physalus* (Methion & López 2019).

Rough-toothed dolphin (*Steno bredanensis* Lesson 1828) is a warm-water cetacean inhabiting tropical, subtropical, and warm-temperate regions, occurring in both pelagic and coastal environments (de Boer 2010). It has a streamlined, robust body with a conical head and a long, narrow, well-defined rostrum (Cardoso *et al.* 2019). The poorly demarcated melon-shaped contributes to its reptilian appearance (West *et al.* 2011). The dorsal fin is prominent – tall, broad-based, and falcate (sickle-shaped) – and accompanied by relatively large pectoral fins (Cardoso *et al.* 2019).

Its pigmentation is typically slate-grey to black, with a darker dorsal cape extending from the rostrum along the back (de Boer 2010; Cardoso *et al.* 2019). The lateral flanks are lighter and often marked with white mottling, while the ventral surface is generally white. A distinctive feature is the bicolouration of the

rostrum: the upper jaw is dark, whereas the lower jaw and lips are stark white (Cardoso *et al.* 2019). Adults can reach a length of 2.65 m long and weigh as much as 155 kg (Cardoso *et al.* 2019).

Steno bredanensis is a highly social species, typically observed in small, cohesive groups comprising 10 to 20 individuals. These groups exhibit strong social cohesion, with individuals often swimming in proximity and engaging in coordinated, synchronous movements (West *et al.* 2011).

The Republic of Cabo Verde is a volcanic archipelago consisting of 10 islands and several islets in the North Atlantic, approximately 570 kilometres off Dakar, Senegal. It is part of the Macaronesian ecoregion (together with the Canary Islands, Madeira and Azores). The waters around Cabo Verde are rich in biodiversity (Freitas 2014; López *et al.* 2019; Roberts *et al.* 2002), with at least 24 cetacean species being reported (Reiner *et al.* 1996; Hazevoet & Wenzel 2000; Hazevoet *et al.* 2010; Berrow *et al.* 2015).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

On 7 July 2025, two small pods of *S. bredanensis* were observed during a boat survey on the western shore of Boavista Island (Fig. 1). The pods were encountered on the continental shelf, at a fishing bank commonly frequented by small artisanal fishing vessels.

The dolphins were observed at ~14:15h local time (UTC -1) at 16.097°N, 23.019°W (Fig. 1), with a vessel speed of 4.2 knots, and the encounter lasted for 15–20 min. One of the pods, consisting of four individuals, approached the vessel.

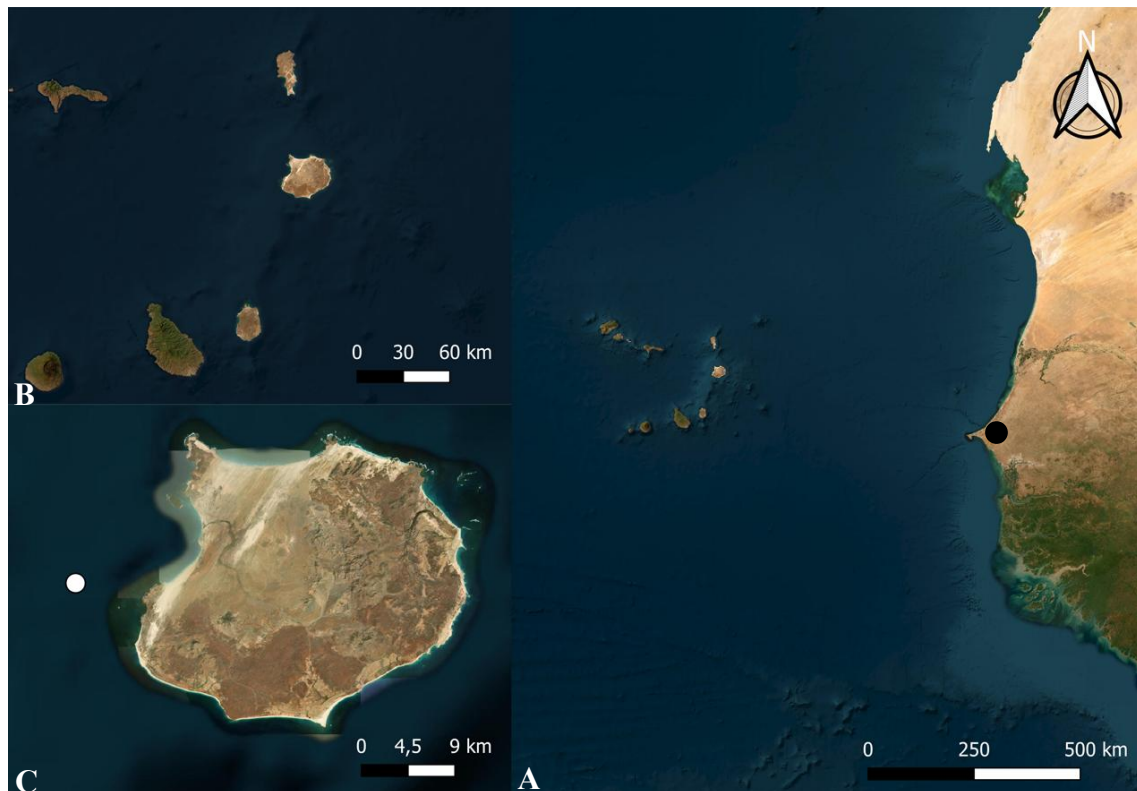


Fig. 1. Geographical location of the study area. **A)** Location of Cabo Verde Archipelago in relation to Dakar, Senegal (black circle in West Africa continent); **B)** enlarged view of the eastern islands of the archipelago, including Boavista; **C)** Boavista showing the sighting location of the anomalously pigmented rough-toothed dolphin (white circle).

During the approach, a whitish individual was observed and the pod was filmed. Footage was recorded from the vessel, using a GoPro Hero 9 (GoPro Inc.) and Insta360 x3 (Insta360) cameras. Observers documented and filmed the presence of the dolphins and their behaviour in association with the fishing activity. Artisanal fishermen in the region have reported interactions with *S. bredanensis*, in which fishermen use rough-toothed dolphins to locate

tuna (which often swim together with the dolphins, according to fishermen).

The following additional environmental data were recorded at the sampling site: low swell (~1 m), Beaufort sea state 4, northerly wind, high water visibility, and a sea surface temperature (SST) of ~24.7°C (Copernicus Marine Service, <https://doi.org/10.48670/moi-00016>).

RESULTS

Both observed pods were associated with artisanal fishery vessels during fishing activity. The closest pod to the observation vessel consisted of four individuals, including one with atypical white pigmentation. This leucistic dolphin showed an apparently normal behaviour. The footage of the videos clearly shows that the individual was mainly white with a faint outline of its characteristic caped pigmentation pattern, as well as some darker spots (Fig. 2 A, B). Although staying mostly behind the other dolphins, the aberrant dolphin approached the observation vessel, performing synchronized swimming with the three normally pigmented individuals, whilst circling and checking the vessel for baitfish. The dolphins remained active at and below the

surface throughout the encounter, showing interest in the bait discarded from the boat to attract tuna. They changed direction frequently, eventually moving away in the direction of another fishing boat. The whitish dolphin showed no signs of physical impairment or emaciation. According to the vessel's skipper, the whitish individual had been observed on previous occasions in the same area. Considering the rarity of such atypical cases in the wild, these observations most likely refer to the same individual, as they involve the same species in the same area (video footage documenting the encounter is available as supplementary material <https://youtu.be/rwoFrIJEW8E>).

DISCUSSION

The occurrence of anomalously white cetaceans has been reported for at least 25 species (Fertl *et al.* 1999, 2004; Hauser-Davis *et al.* 2020; Ortega-Ortiz *et al.* 2022; Lindner 2023). Anomalously pigmented *S. bredanensis* have previously been reported in Hawaii, exhibiting piebaldism (de Boer 2010), and in the Canary Islands, where light-grey individuals were observed (de Boer 2010). The first record of a white *S. bredanensis* off the

African continent was documented off Gabon, West Africa (de Boer 2010). To our knowledge, this is the first documented record of an anomalously white *S. bredanensis* in Cabo Verde and across the Macaronesian ecoregion. The individual is likely exhibiting leucism, characterized by dark eyes and reduced pigmentation resulting in whitish coloration (Fertl & Rosel 2009; Gazda & Russell 2022).



Fig. 2. Photo documentation of the dolphin exhibiting abnormal pigmentation patterns (video material by Gonzalo Mucientes & Sara S. Ratão). **A)** Left lateral view of the individual alongside normally pigmented conspecifics, observed on 7th July 2025, west of Boavista; **B)** Dorsal view of the same individual swimming with another normally pigmented dolphin.

The prevalence of anomalously white cetaceans and the survival prospects of individuals exhibiting such pigmentation remain poorly understood (Fertl *et al.* 2004; Lin *et al.* 2023). Abnormal pigmentation is mainly attributed to genetic anomalies (Fertl & Rosel 2009; Gazda & Russell 2022), but it can also be caused by other factors such as pollution, systematic infections, and scarring

(Lin *et al.* 2023). Atypical skin colouration may increase visibility to predators (resulting in higher predation of such individuals), and reduce hunting efficiency due to decreased camouflage or countershading (Pawelek & Körner 1982; Hubbard *et al.* 2010; Lin *et al.* 2023; Lindner 2023). Additionally, for cetaceans it has been suggested that the loss of pigmentation is correlated to: *i)* a higher

probability of UV damage (Methion & López 2019; Hauser-Davis *et al.* 2020; Lin *et al.* 2023); *ii*) reduced heat absorption; and *iii*) reduced attractiveness to the opposite sex (Hauser-Davis *et al.*, 2020). This suggest that such condition may negatively impact the overall fitness of the individual compared to normally pigmented individuals. Nevertheless, the observed individual exhibited no signs of physical impairment or emaciation.

In addition, this was a presumably sexually mature adult. Other reports of adult dolphins with atypical colouration suggest that it may not affect dolphin survival (Hauser-Davis *et al.* 2020). Further research is needed to clarify how (and if) abnormal pigmentation influences not only physical condition but also social dynamics within cetacean populations, and ecological conditions.

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Nota breve | Short note

The rove beetle *Pinoplanus aegyptius* (Erichson, 1840) reaches Boavista, Cabo Verde (Coleoptera: Staphylinidae, Paederinae)

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Keywords: Macaronesia, new island record, Pinophilina

The rove beetle *Pinoplanus aegyptius* (Erichson, 1840) (Fig. 1A) is widespread and common in Africa. Struyve (2024) reports the species from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Somalia, and Sudan. It has also been recorded from the Cabo Verde Islands. Geisthardt (1988) reported its occurrence on the island of Fogo under the name *Pinophilus aegypticus* (Erichson), based on an earlier reference by Geisthardt (1984), who documented a specimen collected from “Fogo, Umgeb. [near] S. Filipe, 24-27.X.1979”. Erichson (1840) originally described *P. aegyptius* under the genus *Pinophilus* Gravenhorst, 1802 based on material from Egypt. Assing (2022) transferred some species from *Pinophilus* to the new genus

Pinoplanus Assing, 2022, and selected *Pinophilus aegyptius* as the type species. Struyve (2024) accepted this combination.

In addition to *P. aegyptius*, Geisthardt (1988) reported *Pinophilus fossor* Wollaston, 1968, another species in the tribe Pinophilina, from the island of Santiago.

The goal of the present note was to test the presence of *P. aegyptius* on the island of Boavista. Light traps were set on Sal Rei, Boavista on November 26, 2023 (Fig. 1). Collection data are as follows: ‘Cabo Verde | Boavista – 26.11.2023 | Sal Rei, Dünen [dunes] | leg. Aistleitner’. One male and two females were caught, and the specimens are now housed in the collections of Kapp (1 ♂, 1 ♀) and Lillig (1 ♀).

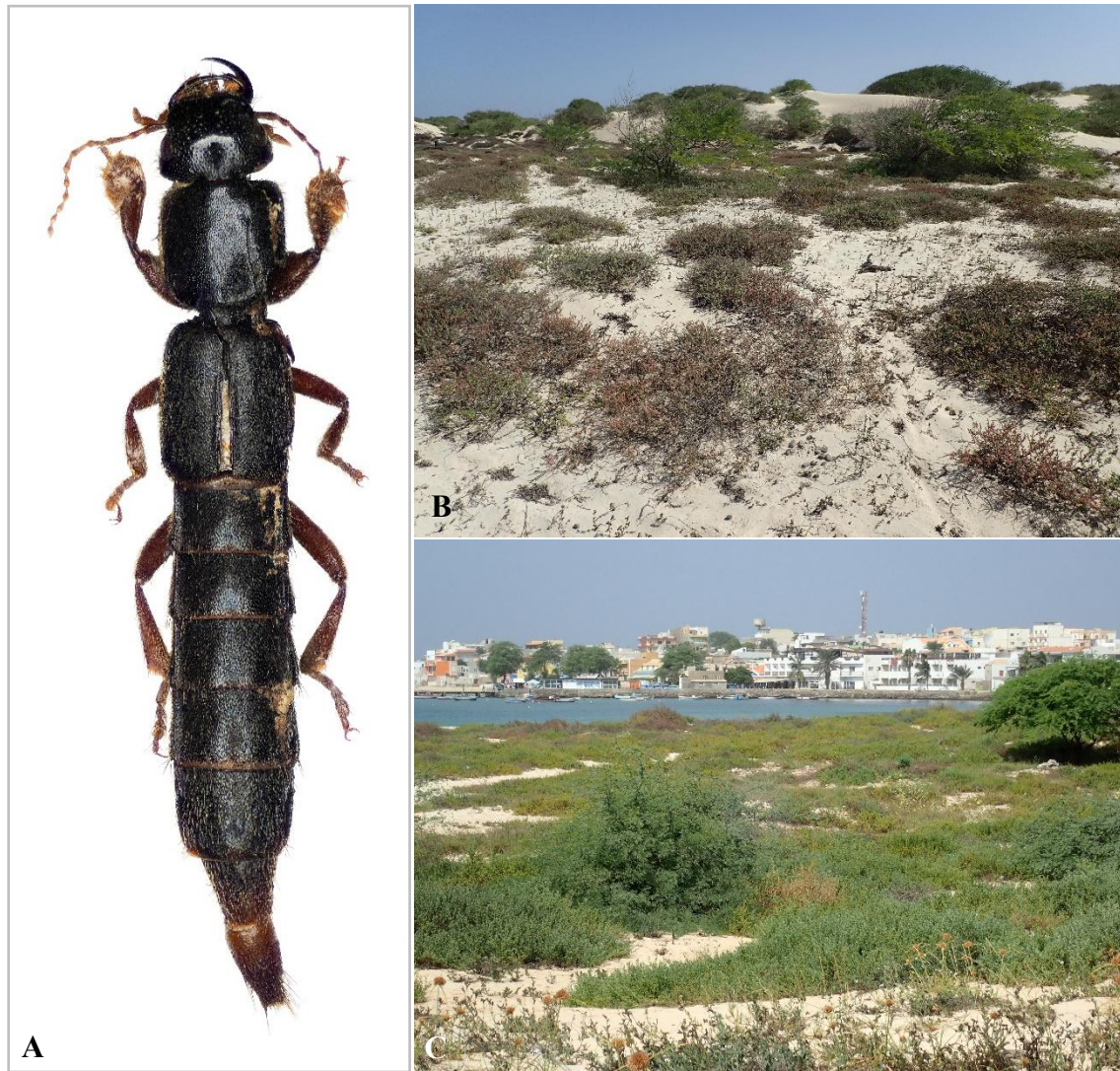


Fig. 1. New record of *Pinoplanus aegyptius* (Erichson, 1840): **A)** A female from Boavista (photo by E. Müller); **B)** Coastal dune biotope. 2 km south of Sal Rei, Boavista (photo by E. Aistleitner); **C)** Location of the trapping (photo by E. Aistleitner).

Like many of the specimens mentioned by Struywe (2024), those from Boavista were caught by light trapping, suggesting that with this method, further records can be expected, also on other islands in the archipelago.

Nothing is currently known about the ecology of *P. aegyptius*. On Boavista, the species was observed with artificial light in the dunes. As light trapping does not allow for precise habitat determination, details of the ecology of the species remain obscure.

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Nota breve | Short note

Range expansion of the house gecko in the Cabo Verde archipelago: new record from São Nicolau

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Keywords: distribution record, *Hemidactylus mabouia*, invasive species, North-western Islands

The introduction of exotic vertebrate species has led to significant ecological impact on endemic fauna, particularly when such species were introduced in island ecosystems and turned invasive. These effects include competition for habitat and food resources, predation and, consequently, in some cases, extinction (Gaiotto *et al.* 2020). In Cabo Verde, invasive vertebrate species have contributed to the decline and extinction of endemic species such as native reptiles (Pinho *et al.* 2022). For example, *Hemidactylus angulatus*, an introduced gecko species, has expanded throughout the archipelago, displacing and threatening the endemic *Hemidactylus boavistensis* (Vasconcelos *et al.* 2013).

More recently, another exotic *Hemidactylus* was introduced in the archipelago due to anthropogenic activities, the house gecko *Hemidactylus mabouia* (Moreau de Jonnés, 1818), which is particularly effective at colonizing new environments (Carranza & Arnold 2006). Previously, *Hemidactylus mabouia* was recorded on four Cabo Verde islands: Santo Antão, Brava, São Vicente, and very recently also on Sal (Vasconcelos *et al.* 2013; Almeida & Vasconcelos 2023). We here report, for the first time, its occurrence on São Nicolau, and the continued range expansion of this invasive species across the archipelago.

During an ad hoc survey on São Nicolau, we found a juvenile gecko specimen inside a residence in Ribeira Brava (16.6157145°N, -24.2960997°W). We photographed the specimen and collected its tail tip for morphological and molecular identification. We extracted its DNA using the saline method and amplified and sequenced it (GenBank accession code PX723529) it using universal 12S primers and the conditions as described in Almeida & Vasconcelos (2023).

We confirmed the species identification as *H. mabouia*, based on morphological features using identification keys and genetic data available at GenBank. Due to its young age, we could not determine the sex of the specimen (Fig. 1). The genetic analysis revealed that the individual shared the same haplotype as those found in the other islands, supporting a recent introduction (Pinho *et al.* 2023; Almeida & Vasconcelos 2023).

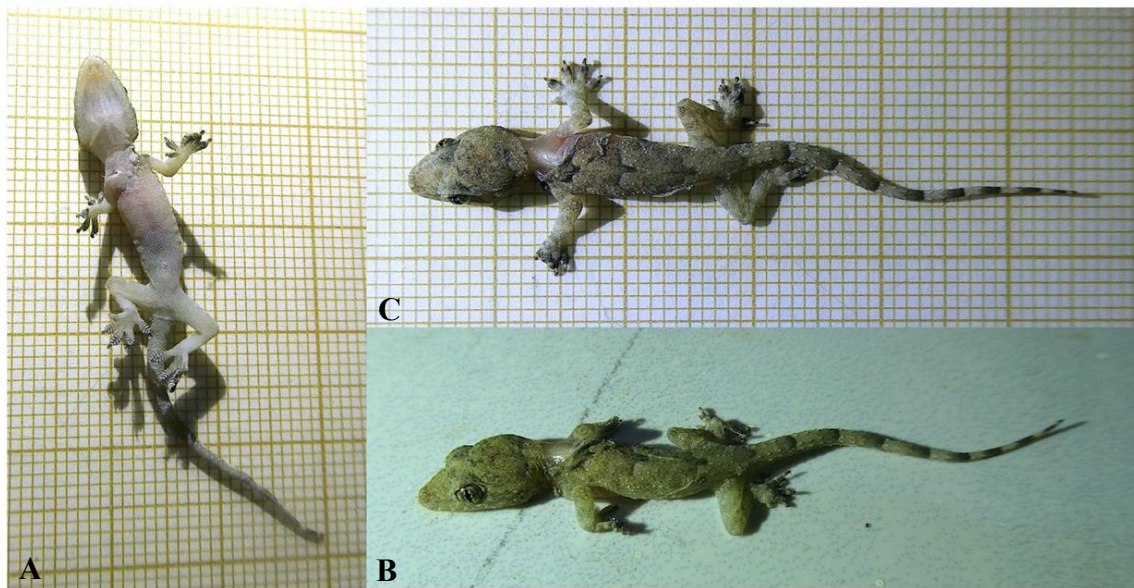


Fig. 1. *Hemidactylus mabouia* recorded on the island of São Nicolau in April 2025 (photos by R. Vasconcelos). A) Ventral, B) Frontal and C) Dorsal view of the specimen (C).

The expansion of *H. mabouia* raises serious conservation concerns due to its competitive interactions with native species (Short & Petren 2008), especially on São Nicolau, due to the presence of the potentially Critically Endangered endemic *Hemidactylus nicolauensis* (Vasconcelos *et al.* 2020). *H. mabouia* shows several advantages over other

species, including greater urban tolerance and higher reproductive success (Meshaka *et al.* 2000). These findings highlight the urgent need for targeted ecological studies and effective conservation measures to prevent further inter-island dispersal and protect Cabo Verdean endemic biodiversity.

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Indivíduo de golfinho-de-dentes-rugosos (*Steno bredanensis*) com pigmentação anormal observado entre outros indivíduos da mesma espécie na costa oeste da Boavista, em Julho de 2025
| An individual of rough-toothed dolphin (*Steno bredanensis*) with abnormal pigmentation observed among other individuals of the same species on the west coast of Boavista in July 2025
(fotografia de | photo by Gonzalo Mucientes & Sara S. Ratão)

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