

## Commensal herpetofauna at Tufi Resort, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea

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**Observers:** Tan Heok Hui, L. L. Koh, K. Tun, E. Goh.

**Photographs by:** Tan Heok Hui.

**Subjects identified by:** Tan Heok Hui, Nick Baker, George R. Zug (2), Sven Mecke (5).

**Location:** Tufi Resort, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea.

**Elevation:** < 50 metres.

**Habitats:** Resort environs, hillside secondary forest.

**Date and time:** 06-14 December 2008, 06:20-19:20 hr

### Identity of subjects and descriptions of records:

- 1) White-lipped Tree Frog, *Litoria infrafrenata* (Amphibia: Anura: Hylidae),  
Heard calling at sunset from within and at the edge of a covered water tank, thus creating amplified reverberating croaks (Fig. 1a). A pair were found in amplexus nearby (Fig. 1b).
- 2) Pacific Slender-toed Gecko, *Nactus pelagicus* (Reptilia: Squamata: Gekkonidae),  
one seen on ground next to resort building, Fig. 2.
- 3) Pacific monitor, *Varanus indicus* (Reptilia: Squamata: Varanidae),  
one seen running swiftly across the resort grounds, Fig. 3.
- 4) Gecko, *Hemidactylus* sp. (Reptilia: Squamata: Gekkonidae),  
one seen feeding on a cicada attracted to a hanging lamp, Fig. 4.
- 5) Snake-eyed Skink, *Cryptoblepharus* cf. *richardsi* (Reptilia: Squamata: Scincidae),  
one seen on a tree trunk by a sandy beach at around noon, Fig. 5.



Fig. 1a.



Fig. 1b.



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.

**Remarks:** *Litoria infrafronata* is widespread on the Sahul shelf, and is located from northern Australia, throughout the lowlands of Papua New Guinea, and the lesser Sahul islands (Barker et al., 1995). It is a common commensal species.

*Nactus pelagicus* is a species complex in the western Pacific: it is currently undergoing taxonomic review, and several new species in Papua New Guinea (PNG) are in the process of being formally described (George R. Zug, pers. comm.).

*Varanus indicus* (Pacific Monitor or Mangrove Monitor) is a widespread species of monitor lizard, occurring in coastal habitats of northern Australia, New Guinea and islands of the western Pacific (Zug, 2013). Its range extends westwards into eastern parts of the Indonesian archipelago. In the field it is identified by its slender body, narrow head and spotted patterning.

The gecko in Fig. 4 is tentatively either *Hemidactylus frenatus* or *Hemidactylus garnotti*: both are commensal species occurring in Southeast Asia whose ranges have extended eastwards into the western Pacific as a consequence of shipping routes and trading activity which commenced in the 18th century (Zug, 2013: 90-92).

The skink identified as *Cryptoblepharus* cf. *richardsi* may be the first record of *Cryptoblepharus richardsi* on the mainland of New Guinea. The species was first described from Misima Island, Milne Bay Province, PNG. The dorsolateral and laterodorsal stripes (Fig. 5) share a close similarity with the description of *Cryptoblepharus richardsi* in Horner (2007) as follows: "Distinct, black dorsolateral stripes extend from above eye onto tail base, where they merge creating a blackish, ragged, median, tapering stripe on anterior half of tail ... prominent narrow, creamish laterodorsal stripes extend from above eye onto tail".

#### References:

- Barker, J., Grigg, G. C. & Tyler, M. J. (1995). A Field Guide to Australian Frogs. Surrey Beatty and Sons, New South Wales, 407 pp.
- Horner, P. (2007). Systematics of the snake-eyed skinks, *Cryptoblepharus* Wiegmann (Reptilia: Squamata: Scincidae) - an Australian based review. The Beagle Supplement 3: 21-198.
- Zug, G. R. (2013). Reptiles and amphibians of the Pacific Islands: a comprehensive guide. University of California Press. 306 pp.