

## *Gonatodes ocellatus* (Ocellated Gecko)

Family: Sphaerodactylidae (Dwarf Geckos)

Order: Squamata (Lizards and Snakes)

Class: Reptilia (Reptiles)



**Fig. 1.** Ocellated gecko, *Gonatodes ocellatus*.

[<http://www.trinidad-tobagoherps.org/Gonatodesocellatus.htm>, downloaded 25 October 2016]

**TRAITS.** Small in size, yet one of the larger species in its genus, the male ocellated gecko is approximately 11cm in total length while the female is a little shorter, usually below 10cm; their tails making 45% of their overall length. Hatchlings are 19-23mm long. They have cylindrical bodies and tails and a pointed snout, and small scales, with the dorsal scales being smaller than the ventral scales (TT Herps, 2016). Mature females are plain in colour while the males have vibrant colours. The mature male ocellated gecko has a base head colour of yellow with reddish-orange patterns, and the neck is marked by a black-bordered yellow ring. The body has a base colour of grey-blue to brown, with black-bordered ocelli (eyespot) which can be light blue or white, and present as one or two pairs located on either side of the body. The tail is a russet yellow to orange colour (Fig. 1). The mature female has a base colour of brownish-grey and a variety of darker or lighter spots and patterns (Fig. 2). The offspring have a similar appearance to that of a female ocellated gecko, except for a distinctive black and white tail that is used to distract predators, since they can survive without a tail and regenerate a new one over time (Hanig, 2016).

**DISTRIBUTION.** The ocellated gecko can be found across the islands of Trinidad and Tobago (Fig. 3) and on Little Tobago. There are reports of the species at Isa de Margarita but these are due to mix ups with other species (Reptile Database, 2016).

**HABITAT AND ECOLOGY.** The ocellated gecko dwells in primary and secondary forests, in humid microclimates, in tree trunks, old houses, deserted buildings and even in piles of garbage that are shaded and wet. On Little Tobago it is most commonly located in stands of the palm trees *Coccothrinax australis* (TT Herps, 2016). Like most *Gonatodes* species, the ocellated gecko is more active during the daytime and is an ambush predator. Feeding on mostly insects and land snails, the ocellated gecko spends 68%-76% of its time perched, pointing its head down in search of prey, and only spends 1.6%-3.6% of its time moving (Werner, 2003).

**REPRODUCTION.** The ocellated gecko is an oviparous reptile: a female usually lays a single egg every three to four weeks and commonly does this on leaves, bark or moss. They may also bury their eggs in moderately moist soil (Virtual Reptiles, 2006- 2016). There have been reports of communal nesting in the ocellated gecko, with more than 30 eggs in a single nest (TT Herps, 2016).

**BEHAVIOUR.** Ocellated geckos are very agile climbers, as they can climb trees and walls. They are, however shy creatures and retreat quickly at the sense of any danger (Hanig, 2016). A mature male *Gonatodes ocellatus* can be territorial and protect areas that are occupied by one or more females (TT Herps, 2016). When the juveniles are hatched, there is very little interaction between the offspring and their parents and they are left to fend for themselves (Hanig, 2016).

**APPLIED BIOLOGY.** The ocellated gecko can be found in abundance and is therefore not an endangered species. They feed on pests such as flies, spiders, mosquitos and other insects and can be beneficial to humans in that way (Hanig, 2016).

## REFERENCES

- Hanig, S. (2016). *Gonatodes ocellatus*, Dwarf Geckos. [http://www.dwarfgeckos.com/gonatodes/g\\_o/gonatodes\\_ocellatus.php](http://www.dwarfgeckos.com/gonatodes/g_o/gonatodes_ocellatus.php), downloaded 25 October 2016.
- Reptile Database. (2016). *Gonatodes ocellatus* (GRAY, 1831), <http://reptile-database.reptarium.cz/species?genus=Gonatodes&species=ocellatus>, downloaded 25 October 2016.
- TT Herps. (2016). *Gonatodes ocellatus*. The Herpetofauna of Trinidad & Tobago, <http://www.trinidad-tobagoherps.org/Gonatodesocellatus.htm>, downloaded 25 October 2016.
- Virtual Reptile. (2006-2016). *Gonatodes ocellatus*, <https://sites.google.com/site/reptilariovirtual/gonatodes-ocellatus>, downloaded 25 October 2016.
- Werner, Y. (2003). Foraging behaviour of three sphaerodactyline geckos on Trinidad and Tobago. *Journal of Natural History*.

Author: Stephon C. Cyrus

Posted online: 2016



**Fig. 2.** A female ocellated gecko, *Gonatodes ocellatus*.

[<http://www.gonatodes.wz.cz/photos/gallery/14-o.jpg>, downloaded 25 October 2016]



**Fig. 3.** Geographic distribution of the ocellated gecko.

[<http://reptile-database.reptarium.cz/species?genus=Gonatodes&species=ocellatus>, downloaded 25 October 2016]

For educational use only - copyright of images remains with original source