

Polychrus marmoratus (Multi-coloured Tree Lizard)

Family: Polychrotidae (Anoles and Tree Lizards)

Order: Squamata (Lizards and Snakes)

Class: Reptilia (Reptiles)



Fig. 1. Multi-coloured tree lizard, *Polychrus marmoratus*.

[https://antoinefouquet.wordpress.com/pics/img_3140-polychrus-marmoratus/, downloaded 28 April 2015]

TRAITS. This lizard can range from 30-50cm total length, with the semi-prehensile tail accounting for 2/3 of this length. Tail slender, tapering at the end with irregular rings throughout its length. Body laterally compressed without a vertebral crest. Head blunt and elongated with 2-5 scales around the snout. Skin colour variation from light to dark green to brown. Eyes globose and conical with eyelids partially fused. Two dark markings pass behind and below each eye (Fig. 1). Exhibits sexual dimorphism, with males being larger than females. Femoral pores in both sexes are present being more distinct in males. Throat whitish to pale yellow with a small dewlap which expands below throat having tooth-like edges (Fig. 2). Limbs short and slender. Toes small and slender, third and fourth being of almost equal length, lacks adhesive toe pads (which separates this lizard from the anoles, *Anolis* species) (Wikieva, 2014).

DISTRIBUTION. Found commonly in mostly South American countries (Fig. 3) consisting of Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia and probably in Bolivia. Native to Trinidad and Tobago (Wikieva, 2014).

HABITAT AND ACTIVITY. *Polychrus marmoratus* is an arboreal species that inhabits semi-deciduous forests and evergreen montane forests within 700m above sea level. Habitat can also range to disturbed areas where human homes are constructed around different locations. Highly abundant in rural areas where there is close proximity to open forest area (Wikieva, 2014). Diurnal and ectothermic (using heat from the sun). Most of the daytime is spent on branches used for feeding, courtship and general basking in the sunlight to generate warmth for metabolic processes. Movement is slow and often generally in a sit and wait position. The night period is used for sleeping on branches to avoid predation (Rubeiro and Watson, 2008).

FOOD AND FEEDING. Diet comprises predominantly of insects. Employs a 'sit and wait' posture for prey using its conical eyes to detect the slightest movement for foraging on branches of trees for long periods of time. Movement among trees is slow and occurs in a stealthy position, hand over hand method which allows easy capture of prey. If potential prey has been identified the lizard sits still and observes the prey. At long distances from prey it will slowly crawl to its target until reaching closer range where it can attack with fast mouth movement to capture prey in its mouth. Its camouflage colours allow greater prey capture in trees. This feeding behaviour allows for greater efficiency for prey capture and consumption. It can use its semi-prehensile tail to hold branches to help capture prey (Williams and Gorman, 1968).

REPRODUCTION. Oviparous. Produces single clutches with multiple soft shelled eggs with average clutch size can range from 8-10 per mating season. Clutch size can vary based on food and other resources available. Breeding last for several months and mating with individuals can last 2-3 minutes. Males tend to position its tail below a female mate and slowly climbs to her back where both reproductive organs meet for copulation. Eggs are laid on soft soil on the forest floor covered with leaf litter to avoid predation and for incubation purposes. Hatchlings may take 6-8 months to fully develop into breeding males and females. Parental care is absent when eggs are laid while young hatchlings have to seek food and protection on their own (Guada and Costa, 2012).

APPLIED ECOLOGY. Species LC (Least Concern) on IUCN database.

REFERENCES

- Guada, G.G and Costa A.A (2012). "Reproduction, Body Size, and Diet of *Polychrus acutirostris* (Squamata: Polychrotidae) in Two Contrasting Environments in Brazil". 46(1):2-8.
- Rubeiro, A. V and Watson, R.S (2008)." Reptilia, Squamata, *Polychrus* spp. New record, range extensions, and distribution map in the state of Mato Grosso, Brazil". 4(3): 362–365
- Wikieva (2014). *Polychrus marmoratus*. http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=es&u=http://wikieva.org.ve/index.php/Polychrus_marmoratus&prev=search downloaded 10 March 2015
- Williams, E.E and Corman G.C. (1968). "Cytotaxonomic studies on some unusual iguanid lizards to the genera *polychrus*, *polychroides* with behavioural notes". Cambridge mass : 316

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Fig. 2. Dewlap of *Polychrus marmoratus*.

[<http://www.trinidad-tobagoherps.org/Polychrusmarmoratus.htm>, downloaded 28 April 2015]



Fig. 3. Geographic distribution of multi-coloured tree lizard.

[http://calphotos.berkeley.edu/cgi/img_query?enlarge=0000+0000+1010+1820 downloaded 4 March 2015]