The genus *Paroedura* embraces a diverse radiation of species endemic to Madagascar and the Comoro islands. This group of nocturnal large-eyed geckoes are widely distributed in a great variety of habitats, from the North to the South of the Madagascan territory (Nussbaum and Raxworthy, 2000; Glaw and Vences, 2007).

The largest species of the genus is *Paroedura masobe*, which is so far known only from low elevation sites in the type locality of Zahamena (Nussbaum and Raxworthy, 1994; Glaw and Vences, 2007; Fig. 1). It is a species with a much localized distribution on low elevation primary forest (Nussbaum and Raxworthy, 1994). It is also quite actively searched for the pet-trade, being one of the most attractive terrestrial geckos (IUCN, 2011).

During intensive herpetological surveys carried out from 2007 at RNI de Betampona (Rosa, 2008; Fig. 1) we found some individuals of *P. masobe*, thus confirming the species presence in this rainforest.

Created in 1927 and currently surrounded by deforested landscapes, the Betampona reserve is a 2,228 ha relict forest fragment located in the northern central east coast of Madagascar. It still holds about 50% of primary-
mature forest, which represents a surviving patch of the former extensive evergreen lowland rainforest (Razokiny, 1985; Britt et al., 2003; Glessner and Britt, 2005).

The first individual, an adult male (SVL of 91 mm and TL of 160 mm; Fig. 2-A,B) was found on the 21 February, 2007 at 21:00 in a site locally known as Maintimbato (17°53.512’S, 49°13.633’E, 320 m a.s.l.). It was hanging on a vertical branch, about 1.5 m above the forest floor. Surrounding habitat was primary vegetation with an air temperature of 20°C and 98% of humidity. Even with work efforts aimed at searching for herpetofauna that lasted seven months, only one individual was seen. A second observation occurred on the 19 October, 2010 at 21:30: a young adult male (Fig. 2-C) was found on a branch about 0.3 m from the ground.

Figure 2. Individuals of Paroedura masobe from Betampona, eastern Madagascar: A. adult male on a vertical branch; B. close up; C. dorsal view of a young adult male. Photos A and B by G. M. Rosa; photo C by F. Andreone.
near Piste Principal (17°55.217’S, 49°12.015’E, 490 m a.s.l.). Our observations came this way to confirm the previous occasional sight made by the Madagascar Fauna Group (MFG) agent (and co-author) Jean Noël.

The new record of *P. masobe* in Betampona extends the known distribution of the species to the coast, demonstrating that this taxon is not restricted to the Zahamena-Ankeniheny Corridor, but it is also present in isolated forest fragments. The nearest known populations are found at the Zahamena National Park at a distance of approximately 30 km.

A victim of its attractiveness and rarity (Nussbaum and Raxworthy, 1994), *P. masobe* is possibly threatened by collecting for the international pet trade: according to IUCN (2011) there is some illegal collection within Betampona and Zahamena National Park. Recently evaluated and listed as Endangered by IUCN Redlist, *P. masobe* is a species highly dependent on habitat preservation efforts in order to sustain the remnant populations already fragmented (CBSG, 2002; IUCN, 2011). We believe that the finding of this novel population represents a new hope for the species preservation and protection since Betampona is a restricted reserve co-managed by MNP (Madagascar National Parks) but also MFG (Madagascar Fauna Group), a NGO oriented to biodiversity conservation and research. Due to the ongoing high habitat degradation between Betampona and Zahamena, once again we highlight the need for creation of a corridor connecting this two protected areas (Andreone et al., 2010) or integration of Betampona in the Zahamena-Ankeniheny Corridor (Fig. 1).

**Acknowledgments.** We are grateful to all the Madagascar Fauna Group members who gave support to this project, especially to K. Freeman and A. Bollen; R. Rocha for his kind help with the GIS; the Malagasy authorities kindly issued research permits. This work was carried out in the framework of cooperation accords between the Parc Botanique et Zoologique de Tsimbazaza and the Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali. The research was carried out with a supporting fund by Wildcare Institute.

**References**


