Amongst the large variety of amphibian defensive behaviors, thanatosis (also known as death feigning) is a common survival strategy (Lutz and Lutz, 1939; Sazima, 1974; Haddad and Sazima, 1992). The onset of thanatosis is usually stimulated by direct contact of a predator with the amphibian. Initially, the individual swells or retracts the body and stays motionless, pretending to be dead, in order to make the predator lose interest. Probably, this type of behavior has evolved as a reaction to general slow amphibian movement, which does not permit effective escape during predation (Duellman and Trueb, 1986; Stebbins and Cohen, 1995).

Currently, the genus *Elachistocleis* Parker, 1927 from the subfamily Gastrophryninae comprises thirteen known species. The members of the genus range east of the Andes mountain chain from Panama and Colombia southward to southern Paraguay, southeastern Bolivia, central Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. Eleven species occur in Brazil: *E. bicolor*, *E. bumbameuboi*, *E. carvalhoi*, *E. cesarii*, *E. erythrogaster*, *E. heliannae*, *E. magnus*, *E. matogrosso*, *E. ovalis*, *E. piauiensis* and *E. surumu* (Frost, 2011). *Elachistocleis piauiensis* Caramaschi and Jim, 1983 (also known as the common oval frog) is restricted to the states of Piauí, Maranhão and Ceará (Frost, 2011). This species is characterized by a ovoid body shape, triangular head, pointed snout, short and robust legs and a snout vent length of approximately 35 mm (Caramaschi and Jim, 1983).

Observations of thanatosis in *E. piauiensis* reported herein took place during January-May 2009 within the municipality of São Gonçalo do Amarante, west coast of Ceará State, Brazil (S 03°30’54,9” / W 38°55’07,7”). On four different occasions we captured one individual adult *E. piauiensis* (27, 34, 26, 25 mm SVL, respectively) during pitfall traps checks located on fixed dunes with mata de tabuleiro vegetation which is mainly composed of the families Cactaceae, Rhamnaceae, Poligonaceae and Anacardiaceae (Figueiredo, 1997). All four *E. piauiensis* displayed death feigning while being manipulated for photographs and measurements (i.e. during fixation by the hind limbs or mid-body) following a failed escape attempt. While exposing their abdomen, individuals stretched their front legs and retracted their hind limbs close to the body (Fig. 1 and 2). The behavior lasted for approximately five minutes, after which each individual returned to a normal body position.

Thanatosis has been reported to occur in several families of amphibians including the Bufonidae (Zamprogno, Zamprogno and Teixeira, 1998), Cycloramphidae (Hartmann et al., 2002), Leptodactylidae (Toledo, Tozetti and Zina, 2005), Ranidae (Gramapurohit, Shanbhag and Saidapur, 2001) and especially...
Hylidae (Sazima, 1974; Azevedo-Ramos, 1995) indicating that it is a common defensive behavior. Records of death feigning within the family Microhylidae have only been reported for the species *Elachistocleis erythrogaster* (Kwet and Solé, 2002) and *E. cf. ovalis* (Kokubum and Menin, 2002; Toledo, 2004). This paper presents a new record for a third species of this genus, providing unique information for *E. piauiensis*.

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**References**


**Figure 1.** Adult *Elachistocleis piauiensis* displaying thanatosis during handling.

**Figure 2.** *Elachistocleis piauiensis* feigning death after being handled.