SCIENTIFIC NOTE

FIRST RECORD OF *PERIPATUS JUANENSIS* BOUVIER, 1900 (ONYCHOPHORA, PERIPATIDAE) FOUND IN *CECROPIA* (ROSALES, URTICACEAE) FALLEN TRUNKS IN PUERTO RICO

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During a fieldwork expedition to collect beetles of the families Lycidae and Tenebrionidae at the El Verde Field Station in the El Yunque rainforest, we had a fateful encounter with two specimens of *Peripatus juanensis* Bouvier, 1900. *Peripatus juanensis* is an endemic species and the only velvet-worm (Onychophora) occurring in Puerto Rico. The species is currently classified in the family Peripatidae (Peck, 1975; Oliveira et al., 2012). Despite the fact that this is the only species of Onychophora from Puerto Rico, little is known about its biology and life cycle.

While sweep-netting in low vegetation for beetles on 4 July, 2017, it started to rain, preventing us from further collecting with that method. In order to salvage the day, we then decided to look for beetle larvae on some rotting logs, where we found two specimens of *P. juanensis* (Fig. 1). The specimens were curled up together in a 15cm long, 5cm diameter segment of a *Cecropia* sp. (Rosales, Urticaceae) log around 11 a.m. at an altitude of 373 m (18.32184°N, 065.81707°W). The log was on the ground in an advanced stage of decomposition and was easily broken when we first handled it, with no signs of ants or termites.

Onychophorans are usually found in forest litter, rotten wood and under rocks in moist shaded environments (Dendy, 1889, 1894; Wolcott, 1948; Peck, 1975; Monge-Najera and Alfaro, 1995 and the references therein), but no direct observations of *P. juanensis* or any other species in *Cecropia* logs have been reported. No information about a preference of plant hosts by species of this group is available (Monge-Najera and Alfaro, 1995), even though a species of *Peripatus* has been reported to occur in habitats with a predominance of Lauraceae in Brazil (Castro and Silva, 2001) and a single individual of *Epiperipatus* sp. (Peripatidae) was found inside a large undetermined twig with a colony of an undescribed species of *Pheidole* (Formicidae) in Costa Rica (McGlynn and Kelley, 1999).

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