



Nota breve | Short note

Presence of an invasive huntsman spider species *Heteropoda venatoria* in Porto Inglês, Maio Island, Cabo Verde Archipelago

Sara S. Ratão ^{1,*}, Andreia Adrião ¹, Herval Silva ¹, Isidoro Cardoso ¹ &
Ailton Fernandes ¹

¹ FMB, Fundação Maio Biodiversidade, Porto Inglês, Maio Island 6110, Cabo Verde

* Corresponding author e-mail: sara.ratao@fmb-maio.org

Keywords: spider fauna, invasive species, distribution, Cabo Verde Islands

Spiders are common in all terrestrial ecosystems and are widely used as ecological indicators (Ross *et al.* 1982, Schmitz 2008). However, the spider fauna of the Cabo Verde Islands (CVI) is poorly known when compared to the other Macaronesia archipelagos (Cardoso *et al.* 2010). The current total number of spider species reported for CVI is more than 200 (García *et al.* 2005, Breitling *et al.* 2011). Maio is a semi-dry desertic eastern island with a variety of habitats. The most recent overview on the Maio spider fauna by Breitling *et al.* (2011) included 46 species from 18 families, including 16 species endemic to the CVI.

The pantropical huntsman spider *Heteropoda venatoria* (Latreille, 1802), from the family Sparassidae (Platnick & Levi 1974), is originally an Asian species, considered invasive in many countries, including Cabo Verde (García *et al.* 2005).

This spider, also known as the giant crab spider or banana spider, often feeds on cockroaches (Bhattacharya 1941), and it is often found in human habitation, possibly due to the abundance of prey (Ross *et al.* 1982). This species was reported by Breitling *et al.* (2011) on Maio; however, they did not provide location details.

We report one individual of *H. venatoria* seen on December 11, 2020, at 11:25 am, inside a house in Porto Inglês, the main city of Maio (Fig. 1). It had a leg span of ~11 cm (Fig. 1B), and a body length of ~2.5 cm (Fig. 1C). The specimen was not collected, but was putatively identified from photographs as *H. venatoria*, due to its synanthropic habitat, large size and brown colouration, flattened body structure, white clypeal band, lack of conspicuous pilosity, dorsal pattern, and legs with distinct black spots from which erectile macroseta arose.

The specimen was sexed as female due to its light colouration on the abdomen and legs and the absence of enlarged pedipalps.

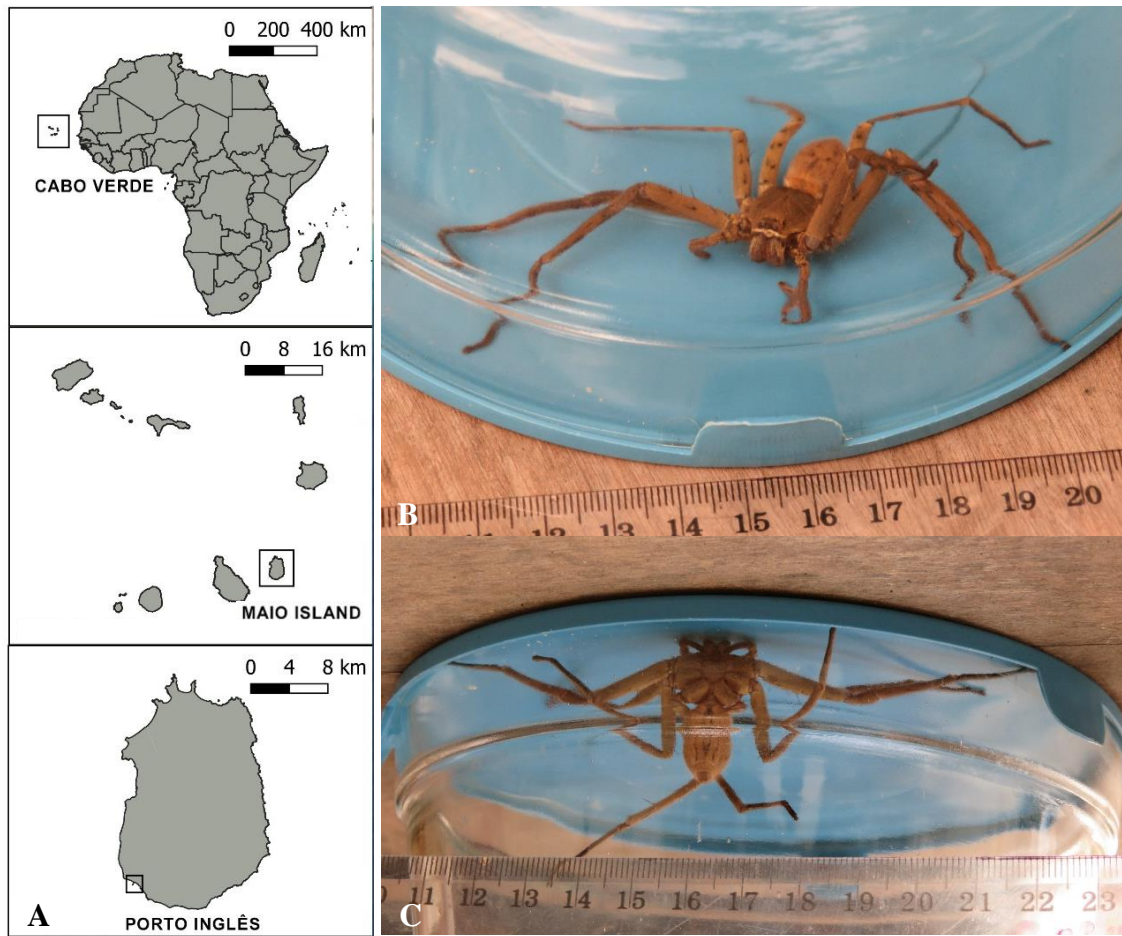


Fig. 1. Location of the site where the huntsman spider *Heteropoda venatoria* was seen and pictures of the caught individual (photos by A. Adrião and H. Silva). A) Location of the Cabo Verde Archipelago, Maio Island, and Porto Inglês, the city where the specimen was found (marked with squares) on December 11, 2020 (site location: 15.139893° N, -23.212388° W). B) Dorsal and C) ventral view of the specimen.

Breitling *et al.* (2011) stated that the actual number of spider species on Maio is probably much larger. They also found that different sampling techniques resulted in different spider species being recorded. This particular species has spread worldwide and its synanthropic occurrence is improbable to

result in conservation concerns (Ewunkem *et al.* 2016). Given the knowledge gap of the spider fauna and its status in CVI, we recommend more studies using a mix of sampling techniques to better understand their population status, distribution, and threats.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank R. Vasconcelos and R. Breitling for identifying the species and C. Sherie and M. Wenger for collaborating with FMB and allowing us to take pictures of the spider at

their house. We thank Direcção Nacional do Ambiente and the local delegation for their continuing support.

REFERENCES

- Bhattacharya, G.C. (1941) Food and habits of the house-spider (*Heteropoda venatoria* Linn.). *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society*, 42, 821–5.
- Breitling, R., Coleing, A., Peixoto, T., Nagle, H., Hancock, E. G., Kelsh, R.N. & Szekely, T. (2011) An overview of the spider fauna of Maio (Cape Verde Islands), with some additional recent records (Arachnida, Araneae). *Zoologia Caboverdiana*, 2, 43–52.
- Cardoso, P., Arnedo, M.A., Triantis, K.A. & Borges, P.A. (2010) Drivers of diversity in Macaronesian spiders and the role of species extinctions. *Journal of Biogeography*, 37, 1034–1046.
- Ewunkem, J.A., Ntonifor, N.N., & Parr, M.C. (2016) Bioecology of *Heteropoda venatoria* (Linnaeus) (Araneae: Sparassidae) and its implications in a tropical banana agroecosystem. *Journal of Global Agriculture and Ecology*, 5, 164–175.
- García, A., Macías, N.E. & Oromí, P. (2005) Sulifuga Araneae. In: Arechavaleta, M., Zurita, N., Marrero, M.C. & Martín, J.L. (Eds) Lista Preliminar de Especies Silvestres de Cabo Verde. Hongos, Plantas y Animales Terrestres. *Consejería de Medio Ambiente y Ordenación Territorial, Gobierno de Canarias*, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain, pp. 38–57.
- Platnick, N.I. & Levi, H.W. (1974) On names of spiders. *British Arachnological Society Bulletin*, 2, 166–167.
- Ross, J., Richman, D.B., Mansour, F., Trambarulo, A. & Whitcomb, W.H. (1982) The life cycle of *Heteropoda venatoria* (Linnaeus) (Araneae: Heteropodidae). *Psyche*, 89, 297–305.
- Schmitz, O.J. (2008) Effects of predator hunting mode on grassland ecosystem function. *Science*, 319, 952–954.

Received 09 December 2021

Accepted 22 December 2021