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The dawn of Yemen Chameleons in the USA does not happen: spreading in Florida, staying in Hawaii and making it to California (Reptilia: Chamaeleonidae)

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Chamaeleo calytratus

INTRODUCTION

The Yemen chameleon, *Chamaeleo calytratus* DUMÉRIL & DUMÉRIL, 1851 is one the most widespread chameleon species in captivity (NEČAS & DVORÁK 2020). In the USA, many feral populations of chameleons exist, so far, from numerous reliable yet partly anonymous sources, the following species have been reported to have been found in the following states, their original home countries are in parentheses:

Chamaeleo calytratus DUMÉRIL & DUMÉRIL, 1851
Florida, California, Hawaii
(Saudi Arabia and Yemen),
Trioceros jacksonii (BOULENGER, 1896)
Hawaii, Florida, Louisiana, California
(Kenya, Tanzania),
Furcifer pardalis (CUVIER, 1829)
Florida
(Madagascar).

EVIDENCE

Florida: In the first decade of this millennium, *Chamaeleo calytratus* has been introduced successfully in the USA to Florida, where it lives and reproduces successfully on both sides of the peninsula in more than 50 scattered, mutually isolated locations, all representing breeding populations; mainly reported from the following areas:
in the west: from Fort Meyers area, up to Tampa and St. Petersburg,
in the east: from the Broward County through Miami and Homestead area to Southern Glades (P. NEČAS PERS. OBS.).

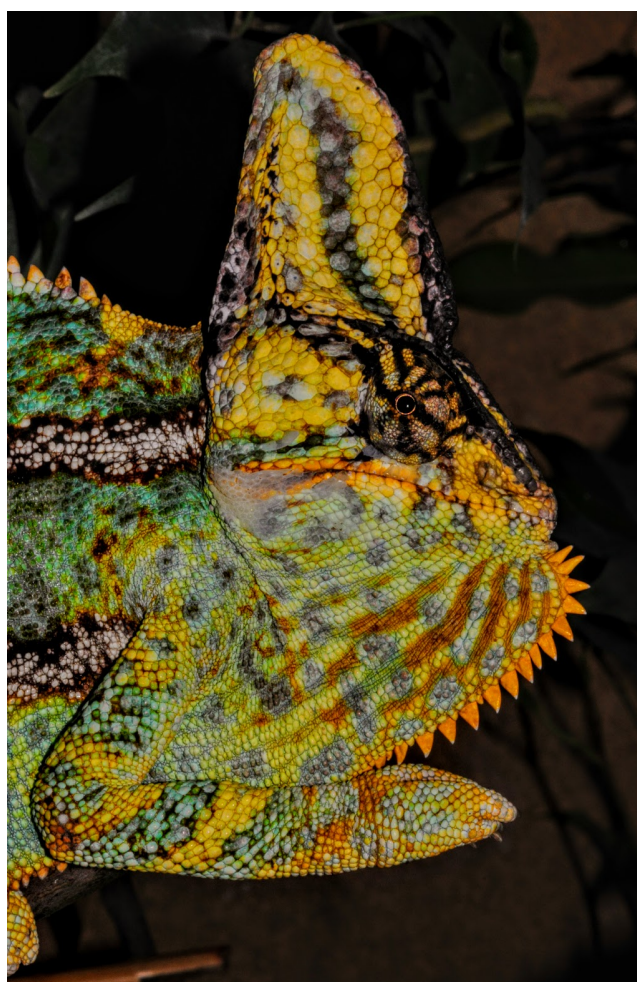


Fig 1. *Chamaeleo calytratus* from Yemen (Yarim) a wild male, 2006
Photo PETR NEČAS



Fig 2. *Chamaeleo calypttratus* from Hawaii (Maui) a feral male, August 2020; Photo ANONYMUS

Hawaii: It has been introduced to the Hawaii island of Maui (KRYSKO & AL. 2004). It was, as an invasive species, under big focus of local authorities. An eradication program was introduced, resulting in the Yemen Chameleon reported as eradicated several years ago (NEČAS & DVORÁK 2020). Anonymous local inhabitants however, report on occasional but repeated sightings of the well-known Yemen Chameleon from young to adult specimens in both sexes and deliver even photographic evidence. So, evidently, the eradication measures were not fully successful. This year, two specimens were handed over to Maui authorities. Under the state department of agriculture's Amnesty program, they can be turned over without penalty (ANONYMUS 2020).

California: The occasional anonymous reports of sightings of the Yemen Chameleon in California, in San Diego county, where the Yemen Chameleon was first time introduced to the US In the late 1980s through the exhibition in San Diego Zoo (NEČAS & DVORÁK 2020), were never confirmed with a published voucher specimen or photo. We fill the gap here with an anonymously reported specimen from the area of Rainbow, San Diego county.



Fig 3. *Chamaeleo calypttratus* from California (Rainbow, San Diego County) a feral male, July 2020; Photo ANONYMUS



Fig 4. *Chamaeleo calypttratus* from Florida (Fort Myers) a feral male, June 2019; Photo PETR NEČAS

The documented cases show the immense survival ability of this species, being very well equipped with tolerance to a wide span of environmental conditions from the extreme highland, unique harsh climate and environmental conditions of their home-country.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Fig 5. *Chamaeleo calypttratus* from Florida (Fort Myers) an aberrant feral male, April 2018; Photo PETR NEČAS