



A New Record of the Northern Curly-Tailed Lizard (*Leiocephalus carinatus*) in Georgia, USA

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The Northern Curly-tailed Lizard (*Leiocephalus carinatus* Gray 1827) is a medium-sized terrestrial lizard native to Cuba, The Bahamas, and the lesser Cayman Islands that favors disturbed, open, sandy habitats and is a generalist predator of terrestrial invertebrates and small vertebrates (Rabb 1957; Schoener et al. 1982). The species was first recorded in the United States in the 1940s following a deliberate introduction into Palm Beach County, Florida, USA, from the Bahamas (e.g., Weigl 1969; Fig. 1). The population expanded to sur-

rounding counties during the following decades (King 1960; Smith et al. 2004; Connor et al. 2013) and recent credible records have extended the range as far north as Duval (2007; UF-Herpetology 151366) and Leon Counties, Florida, USA (2022; UF-Herpetology 201666). *Leiocephalus carinatus* has an affinity for anthropogenic habitat (e.g., parking lots, sea walls, buildings, etc.) and distribution patterns suggest that human-mediated dispersal likely is key to the species' northward expansion (Smith and Engeman 2004). Observations of

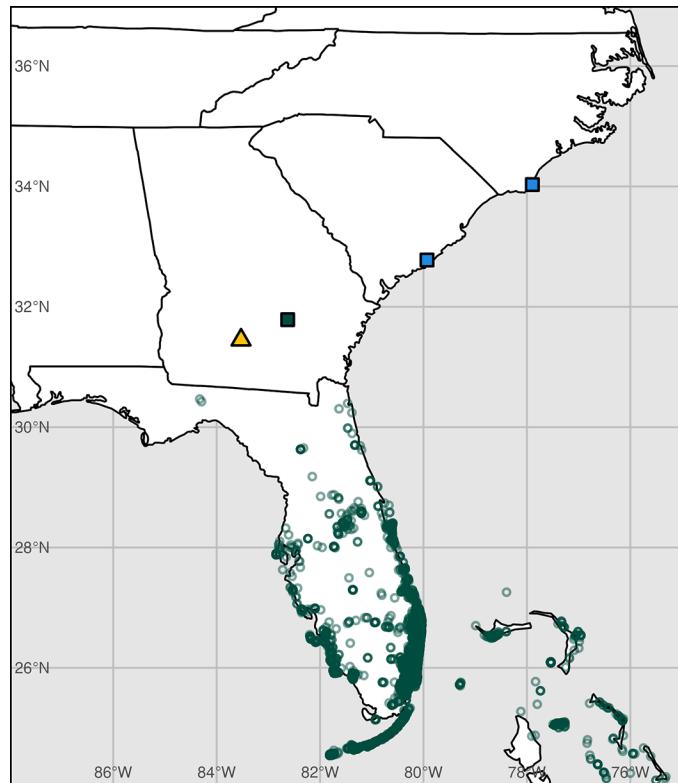


Figure 1. Observations of the Northern Curly-tailed Lizard (*Leiocephalus carinatus*) in the southeastern USA, and northern Bahamas. GBIF observations (GBIF 2025) are marked by green circles, the northernmost iNaturalist observations by blue squares, the previous Georgia record by the green square, and the current observation by the yellow triangle.



Figure 2. An adult Northern Curly-tailed lizard, *Leiocephalus carinatus* (UF-Herpetology 195975), in Tifton, Tift County, Georgia. Photograph by Jonathan J. Suh.

individuals have been reported in Jeff Davis County, Georgia (Brennan et al. 2022), and on the eastern coasts of North and South Carolina (Pearson 2021; Ackerman 2023); however, no established populations have been documented.

At 1601 h on 8 March 2025, we observed an adult *Leiocephalus carinatus* in a landscaped garden bed in a parking lot in Tifton, Tift County, Georgia, USA (31.44929, -83.52807) (Fig. 2). Photographic vouchers have been deposited in the Division of Herpetology, Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida (UF-Herpetology 195975). The identity of the species was confirmed by Joseph R. Mendelson III.

To the best of our knowledge, this is only the second record of this non-native species in Georgia. Currently, no evidence indicates the presence of an established population; however, Tift County supports the northernmost inland population of Brown Anoles (*Anolis sagrei*) — also observed at this location and indigenous to the Bahamas (Campbell 1996) — indicating that conditions could be capable of supporting a population of curly-tailed lizards at this latitude, especially since *L. carinatus* is known to excavate subterranean burrows that could function as thermal refugia during cold periods (Claunch et al. 2021). Because this site is adjacent to northbound I-75 in a Cracker Barrel parking lot, we suggest that this individual likely was a stowaway inadvertently relocated from Florida.

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