

# Guajón Coqui

**Scientific Name:**

*Eleutherodactylus cooki*

**Other names:** Puerto Rican cave frog, Puerto Rican Demon, guajón

**Kingdom:** Animalia

**Class:** Amphibia

**Order:** Anura

**Family:** Leptodactylidae

**Current listing status:** Threatened

**Date listed:** June 11, 1997



Left to right: female and male guajón, by Alberto Puente

**Background**

The guajón is endemic to Puerto Rico and is restricted to the southeastern part of the island. For many years the guajón was thought to be limited in distribution by the presence of “guajonales” which are caves and grottoes made of plutonic, granitic or sedimentary rocks. The native name *guajón* is derived from these rock formations. But today we know the species also lives in rocky stream banks covered with moss, ferns and other vegetation.

The guajón is one of seventeen species of frog from the genus *Eleutherodactylus*, commonly known as “coquíes” that inhabit Puerto Rico, and is the second largest “coquí.” Two other coqui species are believed to be extinct and the golden coqui, *Eleutherodactylus jasperi* is listed as endangered. Coquíes in general are cherished in Puerto Rico and the sounds of singing males are a distinctive feature of the Puerto Rican landscape and valued symbol of the islands natural and cultural heritage. Oddly for a frog, the guajón sings mainly during the day, while hidden within rocks and caves. At night it searches for food. People of elder days thought that its voice was that of an evil spirit in the forest and that is how it gained the name of Puerto Rican demon or “demonio de Puerto Rico”.

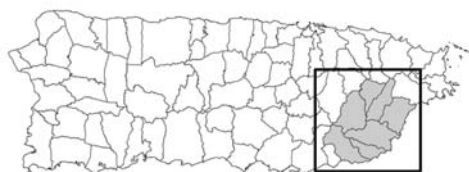
**Description of the guajón.**

The guajón is a relatively large frog, approximately 8.5 centimeters (3.3 inches) in length. Guajón females are larger than males, have solid brown coloration on the dorsal area, are uniformly white on the ventral area; with white-rimmed eyes, and large, truncate

disks on its feet. Males have yellow coloration on the ventral area extending from the vocal sac to the abdomen and flanks. The voice of the guajón is low and melodious.

**Critical habitat effective: November 23, 2007**

The guajón is extremely restricted in geographical distribution and occurs only on privately-owned lands. Threats include deforestation and earth movement for agricultural activities and rural development, road construction and the construction of a reservoir. On November 23, 2007 the Service designated critical habitat specifying within the species range the areas with biological or physical features essential to the conservation of the species. The Service works closely with other federal agencies that permit, finance or conducts activities within the designated critical habitat, looking for ways to avoid or minimize impacts to the species and when necessary mitigate damages to ensure the survival and recovery of the species.



*Seventeen units within these seven municipalities in Puerto Rico are designated Critical Habitat and considered essential to the conservation of the species.*

**References:**

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Moreno, J.A. (ed.) 1991. Status y Distribución de los Anfibios y Reptiles de Puerto Rico. Publ. Cien. Misc

Juglar, R. L. 1998. Los coquíes de Puerto rico: Su Historia Natural y Conservación. Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 232 pp.

Vega-Castillo, S.I. 2000. Hábitat description and comparison of the Puerto Rican Demon or Guajón, (*Eleutherodactylus cooki*) at two localities on the eastern part of Puerto Rico. M.S. Thesis, University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus.

**For more information contact:**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Ecological Services Office  
in the Caribbean  
PO Box 491  
Boquerón, PR 00622  
787/851 7297



