A new ground-dwelling Hemidactylus (Squamata: Gekkonidae) from Maharashtra, with a key to the Hemidactylus of India

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Abstract

A distinctive new species of ground-dwelling gecko of the genus Hemidactylus is described from the plateaus of the Western Ghats of Maharashtra, India. It is a member of a group of chiefly terrestrial Indian Hemidactylus species that have undivided, or only partly divided subdigital lamellae. The new species is most similar in appearance to the lowland-inhabiting Hemidactylus albofasciatus Grandison & Soman, 1963, but can be distinguished by its larger size and a suite of distinctive scalation and coloration characters. A key to the species of Hemidactylus currently known from the Republic of India is provided.

Key Words: Hemidactylus, Gekkonidae, India, Maharashtra, description, northern Western Ghats

Introduction

The genus Hemidactylus, with at least 85 recognized species, is the second most speciose genus of gekkonid lizards in the world (Kluge 2001; Bauer & Pauwels 2002; Henle & Böhme 2003; Baha El Din 2003, 2005; Bauer et al. 2007). The genus is widely distributed throughout much of the Old World tropics and subtropics as well as in the Mediterranean region and in the Americas. However, the great majority of Hemidactylus species have relatively small distributions confined to southern Asia and Africa. In India this is one of the dominant genera of nocturnal geckos and is represented by 21 species. Smith (1935) listed 14 species of Indian Hemidactylus: H. maculatus (in part) Duméril & Bibron, 1836; H. triedrus Daudin, 1802; H. subtriedrus Jerdon, 1853; H. brookii Gray, 1845; H. prashadi Smith, 1935; H. gracilis Blanford, 1870; H. reticulatus Beddome, 1870; H. frenatus Duméril & Bibron, 1836; H. leschenaultii Duméril & Bibron, 1836; H. flaviviridis Rüppel, 1835; H. giganteus Stoliczka, 1871; H. bowringii (Gray, 1845); H. garnottii Duméril & Bibron, 1836; H. karenorum (Theobald, 1868). Loveridge (1947) considered Lophopholis as a synonym of Hemidactylus and thus added one more species to this genus, H. scabriceps (Annandale, 1906). Grandison and Soman, 1963 described H. albofasciatus from Maharashtra. This species has often been allocated to the genus Teratolepis (e.g., Kluge, 1967, 2001; Das, 2003), but current phylogenetic data reveals that this genus should be subsumed within Hemidactylus (Bauer et al. 2008). Later, Sharma (1981) described H. porbandarensis from Porbandar, Gujarat and in 1983, Shukla described H. mahendrai from Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh. Based on the similarity in digital morphology, the monotypic Indian genus Dravidogecko was synonymised with Hemidactylus by Bauer and Russell (1995), making H. anamallensis the nineteenth representative of the group. The most recent addition to the Indian Hemidactylus fauna resulted from the discovery of H. persicus from Gujarat.