

## THE REPTILES AND BATRACHIA OF BARKUDA ISLAND.

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The reptiles are proportionately well represented on Barkuda by 6 lizards, 10 snakes and one, or possibly two, crocodiles, *i.e.*, by seventeen or eighteen species in all. With one noteworthy exception all these are, however, widely distributed and adaptable animals. The exception is the limbless skink *Barkudia insularis*, which has probably escaped notice elsewhere on account of its burrowing habits. Most of the species are, moreover, scarce on the island, and several are represented in my collection by single specimens. Only two species of Batrachia, both common and widely distributed, have been observed.

### Reptiles.

*Gavialis gangeticus* (Gmel.). I have not seen the gharial on Barkuda myself but several trustworthy observers tell me they have done so.

*Crocodylus palustris* (Lesson). A single individual of this species takes up its abode every year in the rainy season on a sand-bank at the N.E. corner of the island.

*Hemidactylus brookii*, Gray. I have not seen this gecko, one of the common house-lizards of Calcutta, on Barkuda recently, but took a specimen some years ago on the shore, feeding on sand-hoppers (*Orchestia platensis*).

*Hemidactylus frenatus*, D. & B. This is much the most abundant reptile on the island and is equally at home on the walls and ceiling of the bungalow, on the trunks of various species of fig-tree, and among stones on the shore, where it feeds on sand-hoppers. The eggs are usually deposited in the trunks of trees. They have a thin, brittle shell and are broadly oval or almost spherical in shape, about 8 mm. long and 7 mm. in maximum transverse diameter. Several are usually found together, but adhering neither to one another nor to extraneous objects.

*Calotes versicolor major*, Blyth. The Peninsular race of *C. versicolor*, though not abundant, is by no means scarce on Barkuda.

*Varanus bengalensis* (Daud.). Frequently seen, singly and in pairs, on the island. In September, 1920, a half-grown individual was dug out of the interior of a mound of *Termes (Odontotermes) obesus*, but a burrow is usually made among stones or the roots of fig-trees. The lizard is, unlike some of its congeners

terrestrial in habits, but has been seen on the horizontal branches of *Ficus bengalensis* near the ground and also swimming in the lake. It often frequents the sides of stone-built wells.

*Lygosoma albopunctatum* (Gray). By no means common. One was seen under dead weed at the edge of the lake. In this position it doubtless feeds on sand-hoppers, as its ally *L. punctatum* has been observed to do at other places on the Chilka Lake.

*Barkudia insularis*, Annandale.<sup>1</sup> Only one complete specimen, the type, has as yet been captured, but Dr. Gravely saw another in the rainy season of 1919. He managed to secure its tail, but the animal escaped. It burrows with great rapidity in the earth among the roots of fig-trees. The tail is extremely brittle.

*Typhlops braminus* (Daud.), *T. diardi*, Schleg., *T. porrectus*, Stol. These blind snakes are found occasionally in the same situation as *Barkudia*.

*Zamenis mucosus* (Linn.). I once saw a large specimen dead in one of the wells, and captured a young one on another occasion.

*Dendrelaphis tristis* (Daud.). This is the commonest snake on the island. It is sometimes seen on the ground, but more often coiled in an elongate figure of eight on the branches of the shrub, *Glycosmis pentaphylla*, or on the small-leaved fig-tree, *Ficus obtusa*, of which it seems particularly fond.

*Dipsadomorphus trigonatus* (Schneid.). A single specimen was taken.

*Cerberus rhynchops* (Schneid.). I have included this snake in the reptilian fauna of Barkuda (while excluding the purely aquatic *Chersydrus granulatus* and *Hydrophis obscurus*, both common in the Chilka Lake) because it sometimes comes ashore. It is common among the stones of the pier. I have seen a large gravid female sunning itself on these stones, completely out of water, in June.

*Bungarus coeruleus* (Schneid.). By no means common, but less rare than any other poisonous snake. I have seen four specimens in eight years. One of them was dropped by a bird on the doorstep of the bungalow in a moribund condition, but the bird was not seen.

*Naia tripudians* (Merr.). I have never seen a cobra on the island, but once found a large cast skin.

*Vipera russelli* (Shaw). A specimen was killed by Dr. Gravely and myself in a clump of prickly pear.

### Batrachia.

The Batrachia are poorly represented on Barkuda. The only species I have seen are *Rana cyanophlycis*, Schneid. and *Bufo melanostictus*, Schneid., the commonest and most generally distributed Indian frog and toad. The frog is abundant in the pond

<sup>1</sup> *Rec. Ind. Mus.*, XIII, p. 19-21 (1917).

and in the wells on the island, in which it breeds freely, the toad is scarce. One took up its abode in the bungalow in April, 1920, and I saw another on a path in the evening, in October of the same year. I have not found tadpoles on the island.