

FIRST REPORT ON THE LIZARDS OF DHARMAPURI
DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

By

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INTRODUCTION

In order to gain an insight into the faunal composition of Dharmapuri District, Tamil Nadu, the Southern Regional (S. R. S.) of the Zoological Survey of India has conducted a Mopping Survey of the plains and hills of the district during April, 1985. The present paper constitutes results of the studies so far completed on 34 lizards collected during the survey. Although some six species referable to two families viz., Agamidae and Lacertidae are reported, this paper assumes significance because it is the first authentic document on the herpetofauna of Dharmapuri District which has been imperfectly known zoologically and also because its lizard fauna could not be accorded special attention by Smith (1935). However, a definitive herpetology of the area should await further explorations which are contemplated.

GEOGRAPHY OF DHARMAPURI DISTRICT

The Dharmapuri District lies between 11°54' and 12°27'N and 77°41' and 78° 18'E. The Cauvery river bounds it on the west and is joined by the Sanatkumarnadi, which flows through the north-western portion of the district. Near the junction of these rivers are the the falls of Hogenekal or the 'smoking rock'.

*Key to the identification of the lizards of Dharmapuri
District, Tamil Nadu,*

The six species of lizards under report can be identified by the following key—

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Head covered with small scales ... | 2 |
| Head covered with symmetrical shields ... | 5 |

2.	Four toes only	...	<i>Sitana ponticeriana</i>
	Five toes	...	3
3.	Body depressed	...	4
	Body not depressed	...	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>
4.	Mid body scale-rows 115-150	...	<i>Psammophilus dorsalis</i>
	Mid body scale-rows 80-100	...	<i>P. blanfordanus</i>
5.	Lower eyelid distinct from the rudimentary upper eyelid	...	<i>Cabrita leschenaulti</i>
	Lower eyelid fused to the rudimentary upper eyelid	...	<i>Ophiosops jerdoni</i>

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Family : AGAMIDAE

1. *Sitana ponticeriana* Cuviea
(Fan-throated lizard ; Four toed lizard)

Material : 1 example, Muniyamman bridge, 4.iv. 1985.

Description : Body compressed. No dorsal crest. Hind feet with four toes. No femoral or preanal pores. Males with gular pouch. Tail very long. Snout to vent length 40 mm, tail 90 mm,

Colour : Dark-brown dorsally with a vertical series of black-edged, rhomboidal spots on the back and whitish below.

Distribution : The whole of India and Sri Lanka.

2. *Calotes versicolor* (Daudin)
(Indian Garden Lizard)

Material : 9 examples : 4 exs. Kulumurupallam, 12.iv.85 ; 4 exs. Hogenakal near Cauvery, 16.iv,85 ; 1 ex. Anchetty, R. Todhella, 14.iv.85.

Description : Body compressed, dorsal scales strongly keeled and more or less larger than ventrals. Two spines separated from each other on ear. Dorsi-nuchal crest well developed extending far behind. Tail long and rounded. Snout to vent length and tail lengths of the largest specimen are 150 mm and 275 mm.

Colour : Juveniles with light dorsolateral stripes which

enclose transverse black spots. Adults greyish-brown above with dark transverse bars. Belly whitish, with dark streaks. Tail with dark brown crossbars. This lizard exhibits considerable colour variation.

Distribution : The commonest lizard of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Also recorded from Sumatra, Hainan, Hongkong, Afghanistan, Indo-China, South China, northern Malay Peninsula.

3. *Psammophilus dorsalis* (Gray) (South Indian Rock-lizard)

Material : 19 examples : 3 exs. Muniyamman bridge, 4.iv.85 ; 5 examples, Hogenakal, 15.iv.85 ; 8 exs. Hogenakal, 16.iv.85.

Description : Body depressed ; 120 scales round the body ; dorsal crest absent ; a deep fold on either side of the neck which unite across the throat. Tail long and slender. No pores. Snout to vent and tail lengths of the largest specimens are 85 mm and 220 mm.

Colour : Olive-brown above with a distinct series of white elongated spots on the back and yellowish below.

Distribution : Hills of South India.

4. *Psammophilus blanfordanus* (Stoliczka) (Dwarf Rock-Lizard)

Material : 1 example Anchetty, River Todhella, 14.iv.85.

Description : As given for the preceding species but with reduced i.e. 95 scales round the body.

Colour : The only example collected appears to be a juvenile and it is olive brown above with a series of lozenge-shaped dark brown spots on the back.

Distribution : Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Eastern Ghats, and hills south of Madras and Salem District, Tamil Nadu.

Family : LACERTIDAE

5. **Cabrita leschenaulti** (Milne-Edwards)

Material : 2 examples, Hogenakal, 18.iv.85.

Description : Head covered with symmetrical shields ; dorsal scales keeled and imbricate while the ventrals are smooth and imbricate. Lower eyelid large and distinct from the upper eyelid. Tail cylindrical. Femoral pores present. Snout to vent and tail lengths of the largest specimen are 39 mm and 63 mm.

Colour : Dorsally this lacertid is brownish yellow and whitish ventrally. The dorsum is characterised by two white lateral bands, the interval between the two bands being black or green.

Distribution : The Peninsula of India and Sri Lanka.

6. **Ophiosope jerdoni** Blyth

(Snake-eyed Lacerta)

Material : 2 examples, Hogenakal, 17.iv.85.

Description : Lower eyelid fused with the upper. A fold in front of the shoulder. Femoral pores present. Snout to vent and tail lengths of the largest specimen are 55 mm and 105 mm.

Distribution : From N. W. F. P. in Pakistan through most of Northern and Central India to Southern India. Smith (1935) includes "Bellary in Madras Presidency" in the range of this species. Underwood (1948) recorded this lacertid from Pune, Maharashtra and Sharma (1982) recorded it from Gujarat. The present specimen is an additional and interesting record from Dharmapuri District.

SUMMARY

A collection of lizards from the Dharmapuri District, Tamil Nadu is reported. The collections were made during April, 1985 and they include 4 species of agamids and two species of lacertids. In addition to the systematic remarks,

brief notes on the colouration and distribution of each species is given. A key to the identification of the material reported is provided.

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