



First confirmed record of *Calodactylodes aureus* (Reptilia) from Karnataka, India

The Indian Golden Gecko *Calodactylodes aureus* (Beddome, 1870) was known originally from the Tirupati hills in the Seshachalam range (Beddome, 1870; Smith, 1935; Daniel & Bhushan, 1985; Bauer & Günther, 1991) and the Velikonda range (Daniel *et al.*, 1986). It is listed under Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act (1972) as it was considered rare, being found at the time only in the Seshachalam range. Subsequently, researchers have revealed the presence of this species from the Papikonda Hills (Perantalapally) in Khammam District, Maredumilli in East Godavari District, Araku Valley and Ananthagiri Hills in Vishakhapatnam District (Javed *et al.*, 2007, Sreekar *et al.*, 2010, Chettri & Bhupathy, 2011) and Kadapa Hills (Guptha *et al.*, 2012) from Andhra Pradesh, Niyamgiri hill ranges of Rayagada, Kalahandi Districts in Odhisha (Dutta *et al.*, 2005) and Vellore and Balmathi Hill, Tamil Nadu (Bauer & Das, 2000; Rajasekhar & Nandakumar, 2007). Furthermore, this species was recently reported from Sathgar Hill, Kailasagiri Hill (Ambur) and Valli Malai in Vellore District, Sayed Basha Malai in Krishnagiri District, Nedumkunam Hill, Melthiruvadathanur (Morambu), Karadi Parai and Sathanur Dam in Tiruvanmalai District and the Gingee Hills in Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu (Kalaimani & Nath, 2012, 2013). Reddy *et al.* (2013) reported the occurrence of this species from Nigidi reserve forest area in the Anantapur District of Andhra Pradesh and this is the westernmost locality record of this species to date.

Bauer & Das (2000) mention the observation of a species similar to *C. aureus* from Castle Rock, in the Western Ghats of Karnataka but no specimens were collected and hence the identity of the species is not yet confirmed with confidence. Other than this doubtful record, this species has not so far been sighted or reported

from Karnataka, India and through this paper we give the first confirmed record of the Indian Golden Gecko *Calodactylodes aureus* from Karnataka.

While studying bats in the south-eastern parts of Karnataka in November 2013, we surveyed many sites in Kolar, Tumkur and Bellary Districts in Karnataka. Hampi (15°20'N 76°28'E), located in Bellary District, Karnataka, is an UNESCO World Heritage Site flanked on one side by the river Tungabhadra and on the other side by vast stretches of boulder hills. At this site, we found many rocky caves and crevices among large rocky boulders. In two such crevices at an altitude of 439 m asl located about 600m away from the river, we encountered a few individuals of Indian Golden Gecko at a height of approximately 1.21–1.52m above ground level. We photographed the geckos to confirm identification and owing to their large size, large-sized eyes, characteristically-shaped adhesion pads of the pes and manus and golden colouration, we confirmed them as the Indian Golden Gecko. We did not observe any egg clusters at this site. Further searches in the vicinity yielded no other sightings and we feel that the population may be using inaccessible crevices located at a greater height above ground level in the location. The temperature inside the crevices where the geckos were found was lower than on the outside rock surface. As with Reddy *et al.* (2013), the present observation of the Indian Golden Gecko is contrary to the observations of Sreekar *et al.* (2010) and Kalaimani & Nath (2013) who reported that the species lives in close proximity to a water source, and substantiates that the species can also be found in drier areas as has been opined by Bauer & Das (2000). The presence of the Indian Golden Gecko *Calodactylodes aureus* in Hampi, Karnataka is in concurrence to a preliminary species distribution modelling study conducted by us to understand the distribution of this species and signifies the distribution extent may

be larger than is currently known, and further research is needed to ascertain its true distribution extent.

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B. Srinivasulu¹⁻⁴, C. Srinivasulu^{1,2}, T. A. Shah¹, G. Devender¹ & H. Kaur¹

¹Natural History Museum and Wildlife Biology and Taxonomy Lab, Department of Zoology, University College of Science, Osmania University, Hyderabad 500007, India

²Zoo Outreach Organization, 96, Kumudham Nagar, Vilankurichi Road, Coimbatore 641035, Tamil Nadu, India

³Biodiversity Research and Conservation Society, G4, MRK Towers, Swarnadhamanagar, Old Bowenpally, Secunderabad 500011, India

⁴E-mail: bharisrini@gmail.com