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A New Locality Record of Indian *Chamaeleo zeylanicus* Laurenti, 1768 (Reptilia: Chamaeleonidae) from Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal, India

Angsuman Chanda

PG Department of Zoology, Raja N. L. Khan Women's College
Midnapore, Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal, India

Abstract:

Present paper is mainly based on the field observation of the species *Chamaeleo zeylanicus* LAURENTI, 1768, the only Indian species which is very rare in West Bengal. It is first time reported from Paschim Medinipur. The author observed a single specimen in a bush of Keshiapata (22.276°N, 87.118°E), a village near Durga Huri forest of Block Sankrail under Jhargram forest range of Paschim Medinipur District. Taxonomic status, distribution and diagnosis of the species has been done on the basis of present observation.

Keywords : *Chamaeleo zeylanicus*, Taxonomy, Distribution, Diagnosis

1. Introduction

The family Chamaeleonidae consists of over 180 species belonging to six genera (Gray, 1865; Reptile Database, 2009), of which more than 56 species belong to the genus *Chamaeleo* (Tilbury & Tolley, 2009). The genus *Chamaeleo* is restricted to the Old World and most of them are distributed in Madagascar and Africa, up to 4200 m above sea level (TILBURY, 2010). *Chamaeleo zeylanicus* is the only representative of the family Chamaeleonidae found in India .

Chamaeleo zeylanicus is found in Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan in South Asia. This species has a fragmented or patchy distribution pattern in south Asia (Parshad, 1914; Smith, 1935; Vyas, 2002). The distribution of *C. zeylanicus* with further range extensions has been described by Singh (1986), and includes areas to the south and west of the Gangatic plains in north India. *Chamaeleo zeylanicus* is common in India, particularly in Tamil Nadu, Gujrat, Rajasthan and part of Maharastra (Vyas, 2002). Biswas and Acharjyo (1977) reported the species from Oddisha, but still it is not reported from West Bengal. This species is also listed as near threatened. On 7th July, 2013 suddenly the author observed a lizard like greenish coloured specimen (total length- 15.5 inches) in a bush near a christen missionary church at Keshapata, very close to Durga Huri forest area. We collect the live specimen and after taking some photograugh and two video scripts we set free the specimen to the forest. On the basis of our observation the specimen is diagnosed as *Chamaeleo zeylanicus* .

2. Result

2.1. Systematic Position

- Kingdom: Animalia
- Phylum: Chordata
- Class: Reptilia
- Order: Squamata
- Suborder: Iguania
- Infraorder: Acrodonta
- Family: Chamaeleonidae
- Genus : Chamaeleo
- Species : zeylanicus

2.2. Synonym

- Chamaeleo zeylanicus LAURENTI 1768: 46
- Chamaeleo coromandelicus FITZINGER 1843
- Chamaeleo vulgaris var. marmoratus GRAY 1865
- Chamaeleo ceylonicus - STOLICZKA 1872 (n. emend. pro Chamaeleo zeylanicus LAURENTI 1768)
- Chamaeleo (Chamaeleo) zeylanicus — NECAS 1999: 113
- Chamaeleo zeylanicus — TILBURY & TOLLEY 2009
- Chamaeleo zeylanicus — TILBURY 2010: 539

2.3. Type locality

Ceylon (= Sri Lanka), restricted by Mertens 1969.

3. Diagnosis

Easily recognizable features include their diagnostic zygodactyl feet, in which adjacent digits are fused on each hand and foot, forming opposable grasping pads where in hands two digits projects outwards and opposite in foot, and the presence of casques, horns, and crests on the heads. It change colour easily and quickly, and eyes, which are on protruding cones, can move independently of one another. Arboreal species have prehensile tails, and have laterally flattened bodies. Extremely extensile tongues (due to modifications of the hyoid apparatus), failure of the pterygoid to meet the quadrate, a reduction in the number of sternal ribs, the loss of both the gular fold and femoral pores, and the V-condition of the ulnar nerve pathway. Like the agamids, but unlike other iguanians, chameleons have accordant teeth. Total body length is 36cm, tail is longer than body.



Chamaeleo zeylanicus LAURENTI, 1768, found in Paschim Medinipur (Yellowish green)



Chamaeleo zeylanicus LAURENTI, 1768, found in Paschim Medinipur (Green coloured)

4. Distribution

Sri Lanka, India (Gujarat, Southern plains of the Ganges), Pakistan

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