



Two new species of *Lankascincus* (Squamata: Scincidae) from Sripada Sanctuary (Peak Wilderness), in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The present work describes two new species of *Lankascincus* from the Sripada Sanctuary (Peak Wilderness Sanctuary) of Sri Lanka. *Lankascincus sripadensis* **sp. nov.** is the largest member in the genus and it is morphologically closely related to *L. deignani* (Taylor 1950). But *Lankascincus sripadensis* **sp. nov.** can be clearly distinguished from other members of the genus, by having three loreal scales, posterior loreals larger than the anterior in longitudinal axis, prefrontal and upper anterior preocular touching posterior loreal; 2nd, 3rd supralabials and 1st subocular scale touching lower posterior loreal; males with pale brown throat and the ventral head; a dark brown stripe in the light brown background on the dorsal body, divided nasal. The other new species, *Lankascincus munindradasai* **sp. nov.** is morphologically closely related to *L. taprobanensis* (Kelaart, 1854) and can be clearly distinguished from other member of the genus, by having one loreal scale, the loreal is touching the prefrontal, frontonasal, nasal, 1st and 2nd supralabial scales, upper and lower preoculars; the loreal is larger than the longitudinal axis.

Key words: *Lankascincus*, *Lankascincus munindradasai*, *Lankascincus sripadensis*, New species, Peak Wilderness, Sri Lanka, Sripada Sanctuary, skink, *Sphenomorphus*, **sp. nov.**

Introduction

The endemic skink lizard genus *Lankascincus* Greer, 1991 is represented by six species in Sri Lanka. This genus is distributed from the coastal planes to the high altitudes of the central highlands that falls within several climatic zones. *Lankascincus* rarely shows sub arboreal behavior, although they are terrestrial in nature and is commonly found among leaf litter material. A pointed head, slender body and strong short legs are well suited for the life among the leaf litters. Generally they lay two eggs and hide them under stones, debris, or leaf litter. Taxonomically the genus *Lankascincus* is most closely related to the southern Indian genus *Ristella* (Greer 1991, Austin *et. al.* 2004). *Lankascincus fallax* (Peters, 1860) is the type species of the genus, and it is widely distributed in the island (Greer, 1991). *L. fallax* is found in anthropogenic and surrounding human habitats. But their population is high in a human habitat surrounded by a forest, where as it is population will be very low in a human habitat with a high level of disturbance, indicating the quality of the human habitat. *L. taprobanensis* (Kelaart, 1854) is found in the highest altitudes of the island. *L. taprobanensis* has a prehensile tail (de Silva, 1997). The *Lankascincus deignani* (Taylor 1950) was described from Gannoruwa, Kandy District (Central province). Other species of *Lankascincus* (*L. deraniyagalae*, *L. gansi* and *L. taylori*) were described along with the endemic genus (Greer 1991). *L. deraniyagalae*, is found in the central hills including sub montane area, and the Galle Fort area in the coastal plane. *L. gansi*, is com-