



A new species of *Japalura* (Reptilia: Agamidae) from northeast India with a discussion of the similar species *Japalura sagittifera* Smith, 1940 and *Japalura planidorsata* Jerdon, 1870

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Abstract

A new species of the agamid genus *Japalura* is described, based on three specimens from Mizoram, northeast India. *Japalura otai* **sp. nov.** is most similar to *J. planidorsata* and *J. sagittifera* and can be distinguished from all congeners by the following combination of characters: adult size (SVL male 46.4 mm, female 52.2–58.7 mm), tail length/SVL ratio 160.5–187.5%, 10–11 supralabials, 9–12 infralabials, 45–47 middorsal scales, 17–20 lamellae under finger IV, 20–22 lamellae under toe IV, tympanum concealed, axillary fold present, nuchal crest, gular fold and gular pouch absent, enlarged keeled dorsal scales present, body shape subquadrangular in cross section. *Japalura sagittifera* is here redescribed, a lectotype and a paralectotype designated and photographs of the type specimens made available for the first time. All known localities for these three species are provided. The status of the genus *Oriotiaris* which was recently revalidated is discussed in detail and again synonymized within *Japalura*. The currently recognised polyphyletic *Japalura* is discussed in relation to morphological characteristics.

Key words: Lizard, Draconinae, Myanmar, Mizoram, *Oriotiaris*, *Japalura otai* **sp. nov.**, description, redescription

Introduction

The genus *Japalura* Gray 1853, currently consists of 26 species which range from north-western India in the west, to Japan and Taiwan, off the east coast of China, north to Shaanxi province in northern China and south to northern Vietnam. The majority of species (18) occur in China, of which 13 are endemic to this country. Six species have been described from India of which four occur in the north-eastern states: *J. andersoniana* Annandale, 1905 (type locality: Dafla Hills, Assam/Bhutan border), *J. planidorsata* Jerdon, 1870 (type locality: Khasi Hills, Meghalaya), *J. tricarinata* (Blyth, 1853) (type locality: Darjeeling, West Bengal) and *J. variegata* Gray, 1853 (type locality: Sikkim). Various attempts have been made in the past to create species groups within the genus based primarily on morphological characters. The most recent proposed division was made by Kästle and Schleich (1998) with their resurrection of the genus *Oriotiaris* (Günther, 1864) to represent several species from northern India and Nepal. Little has been published regarding the validity of *Oriotiaris* and currently it is variously recognized by different authors. There is little known about the species of *Japalura* from India and virtually nothing of the species from Myanmar as the latter are primarily known only by their original descriptions.

Japalura planidorsata is one of the smallest members of the genus with a snout-vent length up to 52.7 mm. Only a few descriptions of this species occur in literature whereby specimens were directly examined and all were based on a small collection of specimens held at the Zoological Survey of India and The Natural History Museum, London (Jerdon 1870; Theobald 1876; Boulenger 1885, 1890; Annandale 1912; Smith 1935; Mathew 2004). Pawar and Birand (2001) provide a brief account on their observations of live *J. planidorsata*, along with additional locality records in northeast India. Vindum *et al.* (2003) mention this species as sympatric with *Calotes chincolium* in the Chin Hills of western Myanmar, and later by Wogan *et*