



A new cryptic rock-dwelling *Hemidactylus* (Squamata: Gekkonidae) from south India

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Abstract

A new species of gecko, *Hemidactylus graniticolus* **sp. nov.** is described from Karnataka state, south India. This large-sized (SVL to at least 110.6 mm), rupicolous gecko differs from congeners in having 16–18 longitudinal rows of fairly regularly arranged, subtriangular, weakly keeled, striated tubercles at midbody; 9–11 and 12–13 subdigital lamellae on the first and fourth digits, respectively, of both manus and pes; tail with transverse series of four enlarged tubercles on each tail segment; 23–28 femoral pores on each side separated by 1–3 poreless scales; 12–14 supralabials and 9–11 infralabials. Molecular data support the distinctiveness of the new species and its affinities with large-bodied, tuberculate *Hemidactylus* spp. from India and Sri Lanka.

Key words: *Hemidactylus graniticolus* **sp. nov.**, *H. maculatus*, *H. hunae*, *H. prashadi* group, cryptic species, India

Introduction

Hemidactylus is the most species-rich Indian gekkonid genus with at least 25 described species (Giri and Bauer 2008; Mahony 2009; Bauer *et al.* 2010a). Though dominant across the subcontinent, *Hemidactylus* geckos remain poorly known, with a number of recent descriptions and taxonomic works significantly altering the view of both regional and local diversity (Zug *et al.* 2007; Giri 2008; Giri and Bauer 2008; Giri *et al.* 2009; Mahony 2009; Bauer *et al.* 2010a,b).

Hemidactylus maculatus Duméril & Bibron is one of the largest geckos in the Indian subcontinent, and is widely distributed, with confirmed reports from localities across the Western Ghats of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala and Tamil Nadu (Smith 1935; Tikader and Sharma 1992; Das 2002; Sharma 2002; personal observations). There are stray reports of *H. maculatus* from Madhya Pradesh (Sanyal and Dasgupta 1990; Ingle 2003), and Andhra Pradesh (McCann 1945). Both these localities lie outside the Western Ghats, in central and eastern India respectively. There has been no detailed study on these specimens, and our observations on McCann's specimen from Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh show that it differs from true *H. maculatus*.

Deraniyagala (1937) recorded *Hemidactylus maculatus* from Sri Lanka based on a female specimen collected from Okanda, Eastern Province. He described this as a new form, *H. maculatus hunae* Deraniyagala, designating the Sri Lankan specimen as the type for this subspecies; with the material examined and assigned to this subspecies including specimens from South India (Malabar, Tinnevely and Salem). Deraniyagala (1937) restricted the nominate race *H. m. maculatus* to northern localities. More recently, Bauer *et al.* (2010a) recognized *Hemidactylus hunae* as a distinct species, within the *brookii* group and sister to the Indian endemic *H. prashadi* Smith.

Based on our observations of specimens in the collection of the Natural History Museum, London, the material referred to *Hemidactylus maculatus hunae* by Deraniyagala (1937) is composed of three different forms, which include *H. hunae*, represented by the type specimen from Sri Lanka; typical *H. maculatus*, represented by three