

HERPETOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN THE WESTERN GHATS,
SOUTH INDIA.

PART I. THE VANJIKADAVU AND NADUKANI FORESTS,
KERALA STATE

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ABSTRACT: Between February and March, 1990, herpetological fieldwork in the Vanjikadavu and Nadukani forests, in Trichur district, Kerala, India, was conducted. Twenty one species of amphibians and reptiles were observed during the said period, including representatives of anurans, caecilians, testudines, snakes and lizards. Data on microhabitat, parasites, and reproduction are also presented herein.

THE remarkably rich herpetofauna of the tropical moist forests of Kerala, in southwestern India, has been the subject of suprisingly few investigations, and basic biological data, needed for management and conservation, on species endemic to the Western Ghats, is still lacking.

We conducted field surveys in the Vanjikadavu and Nadukani forests of Chalakudy Division, Trichur district, Kerala, south India, between 26 February - 4 March and 20 - 26 March, 1990, as part of a larger project to collect status, distributional, taxonomic and ecological data on the amphibian and reptilian species of the Western Ghats.

There seems to have been no previous faunistic surveys of the Vanjikadavu region of Chalakudy subdivision. The area lies approximately 6 km west of the Kadar settlement of Anaipandam, and comprises primarily evergreen forests, punctuated with secondary forests, which bear scars of forest fires. Nadukani is situated approximately 8 km from Anaipandam, and comprises more intact evergreen forests. Both valleys are thought to support populations of the endemic Western Ghats testudines, *Indotestudo forstenii* and *Geoemyda silvatica*, the ecology of which was studied by the biologist J. Vijaya, in the Nadukani region, between 1983-84.

The following abbreviations have been used in the text: Snout-vent length (SV), total body length (TBL), head width(HW), straight carapace length (SCL) and straight carapace width (SCW). HW was taken at the angle of the jaws for amphibians, lizards and snakes, at the greatest width for the tortoises.

AMPHIBIA

Anura

1. *Bufo microtyimpanum* Boulenger (1882)

Material: Two examples, SV 3.45 and 2.53 cm, HW 1.25 and 0.9 cm. Vanjikadavu. 28 February 1990.

Ecological notes: Both examples were found at a forest clearing, near a stream, at night.

2. *Nyctibatrachus major* Boulenger (1882)

Material: One example, SV 1.73 cm, HW 0.77 cm. Vanjikadavu. 27 February, 1990.

Ecological notes: Found under a stone, along the side of a stream, on water-logged substrate.

3. *Rana beddomeii* (Gunther, 1875)

Material: Six examples, SV 2.24 - 3.23 ($x = 2.64 \pm SD 0.39$) cm, HW 0.87 - 1.3 ($x = 1.03 \pm SD 0.17$) cm. Nadukani and Vanjikadavu.

Ecological notes: A very common species, especially at Nadukani, found on the dry stream bed, tree buttresses and on the forest floor, often