
A review of the gekkonid genus *Calodactylodes* (Reptilia: Squamata) from India and Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Gekkonid lizards of the genus *Calodactylodes* are endemic to peninsular India and Sri Lanka. The genus consists of two species, *C. aureus* and *C. illingworthorum* (formerly *C. illingworthi*) and is diagnosable on the basis of derived digital structure, the presence of paraphalanges, bright yellow gular patch (at least in adult males), and distinctive vocalisation. The skeletal, hemipenial, and external morphology of both species is described. Field observations of *C. aureus* at Vellore, Tamil Nadu, indicate that males are highly vocal and that communal egg-laying occurs. *Calodactylodes aureus* appears to be common in appropriate habitats and is probably more widely distributed than previously believed. Relationships of *Calodactylodes* to other gekkonids remain obscure but may reflect Gondwanan origins.

Keywords. *Calodactylodes aureus*, *Calodactylodes illingworthorum*, systematics, natural history, morphology, vocalisation, India, Sri Lanka.

Introduction

Lizards of the genus *Calodactylodes* are large, distinctive geckos endemic to rocky habitats in peninsular India and Sri Lanka. Despite their size, distinctive morphology, bright colouration, and loud vocalisation, these lizards have remained among the most poorly known geckos in the world and among the least appreciated members of the south Asian herpetofauna. Although consistently cited in checklists (e.g., Wermuth, 1965; Kluge, 1993), virtually nothing is known of the phylogeny or biology of *Calodactylodes*.

The genus *Calodactylus* was erected by Beddome (1870) for a new species, *C. aureus* (Fig. 1), from “amongst rocks in dark shady ravines on the Tripatty hills in North Arcot”. The generic name was discovered to be a junior homonym of *Calodactylus* Blanchard 1850 (Insecta: Coleoptera) and *Calodactylodes* was provided as a replacement name by Strand (1928). Although the original description did not specify the number of specimens in the type series, Boulenger (1885) referred to two adults from “Eastern Ghats” as the types and indicated that

several additional specimens from “North Arcot” were in the British Museum collection. Smith (1935) subsequently referred to the same two “type” specimens, but he explicitly mentioned eight additional geckos, corresponding to the ten specimens presently housed in the collection of the Natural History Museum, London (BMNH). Smith clarified that the two specimens that he regarded as types were associated with the specific locality of the Tripatty Hills, which he interpreted as meaning the Tirupati Hills, Andhra Pradesh. One additional specimen (ZMB 17555), apparently collected by Beddome has been located in the collection of the Zoological Museum of the Humboldt University in Berlin (Bauer and Günther, 1991). This specimen is associated with the locality “Callop Hills,” but there is a strong possibility that this is in error. Bauer and Günther (1991) regarded all ten specimens reported by Smith (1935) in the Natural History Museum, London, as well as the Berlin specimen as constituting the type series. No further specimens of *Calodactylodes aureus* were recorded until Daniel and Bhushan (1985)