

Rediscovery of *Mictopholis austeniana* (Annandale, 1908) (Squamata: Agamidae)

ABHIJIT DAS¹ AND INDRANEIL DAS²*

¹Aaranyak, Division of Herpetology, 50,
Samanwoy Path, Survey, Guwahati
781 028, Assam, INDIA

²Institute of Biodiversity and
Environmental Conservation, Universiti
Malaysia Sarawak, 94300, Kota
Samarahan, Sarawak, MALAYSIA

Abstract: The poorly-known agamid lizard, *Mictopholis austeniana*, hitherto known from the unique holotype collected nearly a century ago from “Hills near Harmatti” (in Arunachal Pradesh, Northeast India), is reported from two sites in Arunachal Pradesh. The colouration of a live specimen is described and the species illustrated in colour for the first time.

Key words: Agamidae; Arunachal Pradesh; India; *Mictopholis austeniana*; Rediscovery

The monotypic genus *Mictopholis* was established by Smith (1935) for *Salea austeniana* Annandale, 1908, the etymology derived from the Greek, meaning ‘mixed scales’, an allusion to the scattered enlarged scales on body. The species was named for Lieutenant Colonel Henry Haversham Godwin-Austen (1834–1923), of the Indian Survey Department, a speleologist who surveyed the remote Assam region of British India, Burma, Iran and Ethiopia, collecting reptiles and molluscan specimens for the Indian Museum as well as geological specimens for the British Museum of Natural History (see Palmer [1924] and Smith [1931:10], for biographies). Apart from the holotype (Zoological Survey of India [ZSI] 3976: Das et al., 1998), collected

from “Hills near Harmatti” (at present encompassed within the city of Itanagar [27°02'N; 93°38'E], Arunachal Pradesh, Northeast India), no specimen has been collected. There are no citations of this taxon in the literature, except for the unpublished thesis of Moody (1980) and several checklists (Wermuth, 1967; Welch et al., 1990; Zhao and Adler, 1993; Welch, 1994; Das, 1994, 1996, 1997, 2001, 2003; Manthey and Schuster, 1996; Barts and Wilms, 1997).

We report here two additional specimens of *Mictopholis austeniana* (Annandale, 1908), both collected from Arunachal Pradesh, West Kameng District Northeast India: ZSI 24841 from Bomdila (27°15'N; 92°24'E), and Museum of Arya Vidyapeeth College, Guwahati [MAVC] L31 (ex-ADL 001) from Sangti Valley (27°26'48"N; 92°04'60"E; 1,650 m asl), Dirang (Fig. 1). This is the first record of the species almost a century after the original description of Annandale (1908). Moreover, live colouration of the species is described for the first time on the basis of one of the two specimens (Figs. 2–3).

Harmati (the type locality) falls within the Dafla Hills, located east of the Kameng River, whereas Bomdila and Dirang, though located in the same range, are not part of these hills, which essentially comprise the foothill of the eastern Himalayas (see geological map in Yin et al., 2006). These hills cover three protected

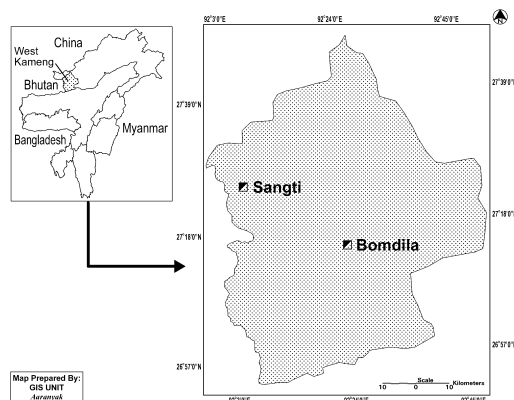


FIG. 1. Map of Northeast India (inset on left), showing West Kameng District and the two localities of *Mictopholis austeniana* (Annandale, 1908).

* Corresponding author: Tel: +60 82 581388, ext. 2296; Fax: +60 82 671727;
E-mail address: idas@ibec.unimas.my



FIG. 2. *Micropholis austeniana* (Annandale, 1908), showing whole body of adult female, from Sangti Valley, Arunachal Pradesh, Northeast India. MAVC L31 (snout-vent length=91 mm).



FIG. 3. *Micropholis austeniana* (Annandale, 1908), showing head and forebody of adult female, from Sangti Valley, Arunachal Pradesh, Northeast India. MAVC L31 (snout-vent length=91 mm).

areas (Pakhui, Sessa, and Eagle nest in Arunachal Pradesh). The straight line distance between Bomidila and Dirang is ca. 20 km.

No field data are available for ZSI 24841. MAVC L31, an adult female, was collected by

the first author at 1400 h on 21 July 2005, from the trunk of a tree ca. 0.9 m in diameter at ca. 0.6 m above ground. The area of collection was a gentle forested slope, ca. 1 km away from human habitation. The ground color of dorsum of this specimen is olive-brown, with enlarged green scales; rounded black pupil with a narrow, pale ring; iris reddish-brown; supralabials and infralabials olive-green and cream; some labial scales edged with olive-brown; a broad olive postocular stripe; tympanum grey-black; forehead with irregular green blotches, each covering 2–3 scales; an olive-cream stripe running from posterior of nostrils, below orbit of eye, to below tympanum; scales forming dorsal crest pale green, those in nuchal region paler; tail olive with vague brown bands; fore and hind limbs olive or brownish-olive with green bands; granular scales on inguinal region distinctly greenish-yellow; venter light green.

Snout-vent length 91 mm; axilla to groin length 47.5 mm; head length 23.9 mm; head

width 17.7 mm; head depth 12.5 mm; tail length 193 mm; tail width at base 11.5 mm; eye diameter 8.52 mm. As in several other agamid genera of primarily green coloration or lineages otherwise showing crypsis (=surface mimicry) from montane regions of Asia, such as *Ceratophora*, *Cophotis*, *Phoxophrys*, and *Salea*, the Sangti Valley specimen was remarkably docile, and unlike some members of these other genera, did not attempt threat display by opening its mouth.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank J. R. B. Alfred, Director, Zoological Survey of India, and C. K. Murthy, Officer-in-Charge, for permission and facilities to examine material under their care. The first author would like to thank Sandeep Das of Yak Research Center, Dirang, Arunachal Pradesh, for logistic support and Saibal Sengupta of Arya Vidyapeeth College, Guwahati, for providing lab facilities. Thanks are also due to Pranjit Kumar Sharma of Aaranyak, GIS Unit, for preparing Fig. 1.

LITERATURE CITED

- ANNANDALE, N. 1908. Description of a new species of lizard of the genus *Salea* from Assam. *Rec. Indian Mus.* 2: 37–38.
- BARTS, M. AND T. WILMS (eds.). 1997. Catalogue of Valid Species and Synonyms. Volume 4. Agamidae. Herprint Intern., Bredell.
- DAS, I. 1994. The reptiles of south Asia: a checklist and distributional summary. *Hamadryad* 19: 15–40.
- . 1996. *Biogeography of the Reptiles of South Asia*. Krieger Publishing Company, Malabar, Florida.
- . 1997. Checklist of the reptiles of India, with English common names. *Hamadryad* 22: 32–45.
- . 2001. Threatened herpetofauna of India p. 63–70. *In*: C. N. B. Bambaradeniya and V. N. Samarasekara (eds.), *An Overview of the Threatened Herpetofauna of South Asia*. IUCN Sri Lanka and Asia Regional Biodiversity Programme, Colombo.
- . 2003. Growth of knowledge on the reptiles of India, with an introduction to systematics, taxonomy and nomenclature. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 100 (Centenary Issue, 2 & 3): 446–501.
- DAS, I., B. DATTAGUPTA, AND N. C. GAYEN. 1998. History and catalogue of reptile types in the collection of the Zoological Survey of India. *J. South Asian Nat. Hist.* 3: 121–172.
- MANTHEY, U. AND N. SCHUSTER. 1996. *Agamid Lizards*. T. F. H. Publications, Inc., Neptune City, New Jersey.
- MOODY, S. M. 1980. Phylogenetic and Historical Biogeographical Relationships of the Genera in the Family Agamidae (Reptilia: Lacertilia). Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- PALMER, T. S. 1924. Lieut. Col. Henry Haversham Godwin-Austen. *The Auk* 41: 512–513.
- SMITH, M. A. 1931. *The Fauna of British India, including Ceylon and Burma*. Vol. I. Loricata, Testudines. Taylor and Francis, London.
- . 1935. *The Fauna of British India, including Ceylon and Burma*. Reptilia and Amphibia. Vol. II.—Sauria. Taylor and Francis, London.
- WELCH, K. R. G. 1994. *Lizards of the World*. A Checklist. 5. Agamidae, Chamaeleonidae, Cordylidae and Gerrhosauridae. R & A Research and Information Limited/KCM Books, Taunton.
- WELCH, K. R. G., P. S. COOKE, AND A. S. WRIGHT. 1990. *Lizards of the Orient: A Checklist*. Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, Malabar, Florida.
- WERMUTH, H. 1967. Liste der rezenten Amphibien und Reptilien. Agamidae. *Das Tierreich* 86. Walter de Gruyter and Co., Berlin.
- YIN, A., C. S. DUBEY, T. K. KELTY, G. E. GEHRELS, C. Y. CHOU, M. GROVE AND O. LOVERA. 2006. Structural evolution of the Arunachal Himalaya and implications for asymmetric development of the Himalayan orogen. *Cur. Sci.* 90: 195–206.
- ZHAO, E.-M. AND K. K. ADLER. 1993. *Herpetology of China*. Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, Contributions to Herpetology, No. 10, Oxford, Ohio.

Accepted: 24 January 2007