



A Bifurcated Tail in a Common House Gecko (*Hemidactylus frenatus*) from the Moyar River Valley, Tamil Nadu, India

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The Common House Gecko (*Hemidactylus frenatus*), which is native to tropical Asia and the Indo-Pacific (Case et al. 1994), is considered the most widely distributed gecko in the world due to a plethora of accidental introductions in tropical and subtropical habitats (Rödder et al. 2008; Carranza and Arnold 2006; Lei and Booth 2014).

Bifurcated tails are abnormalities that typically result from incomplete caudectomy, which may occur during escape from a predator (Arnold 1988; Meyer et al. 2002) resulting in sufficient damage to trigger new tail growth (Gandla and Srinivasulu 2015), or from spinal cord issues or as an effect of mutation (Brindley 1894). Bifurcation of the tail is relatively rare in nature (Kornilev et al. 2018) and may affect an animal’s fitness adversely as the tail plays a vital role in locomotion, and can affect such activities as mating, foraging, and the ability to escape from predators (Passos et al. 2014).

At 2107 h on 27 March 2019, we observed a subadult *H. frenatus* in Thengumrahada Village (76.9094°N, 11.5552°E) located between the Mudumalai and Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserves in the Moyar River Valley, Tamil Nadu, India. The tail had a Y-shaped bifurcation, with both branches appearing to be regenerated (Fig. 1). The cause of the bifurcation is unknown. Although we were able to photograph the lizard,

it evaded capture and we were unable to measure it or collect any other data.

Tail bifurcation in Common House Geckos has been reported from Bangladesh (Khan 2004; Maria and Al-Razi 2018; Khandakar and Sultana 2020) and from introduced populations in Hawai’i (Chan et al. 1984), Honduras (Heyborne and Mahan 2017), and Mexico (García-Vinalay et al. 2017). This report documents the first known case of this condition in an individual from Tamil Nadu, India.

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Fig. 1. A Common House Gecko (*Hemidactylus frenatus*) with a bifurcated tail in a human habitation within protected areas of the Moyar River Valley, Tamil Nadu, India. Photograph by Sreedharan Nair Vishnu.

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