



Nesting and Egg-laying Behavior of a Common Green Forest Lizard, *Calotes calotes* (Linnaeus 1758), from Tamil Nadu, Southern Western Ghats of India

Amit Sayyed, Abhijit Nale, Kiran Ahire, Mahesh Bandgar, Hrushikesh Awale, Vikas Jagtap, and G. Gokulakrishnan

Wildlife protection and Research Society, Satara, Maharashtra, India (amitsayyedsatara@gmail.com [corresponding author], abhijeetnale443@gmail.com, kiranahire883@gmail.com, maheshbandgar0011@gmail.com, hrushikeshawale@gmail.com, japankarate.kwf@gmail.com, gokulakrishnan123@gmail.com)

The Common Green Forest Lizard (*Calotes calotes*) occurs in much of southern India and throughout Sri Lanka

(Annandale 1909; Manamendra-Arachchi and Liyanage 1994), but its presence in the Nicobar Islands is doubt-



Fig. 1. Female Common Green Forest Lizard (*Calotes calotes*) clearing leaf litter from a nesting site (A), excavating a nest (B), depositing eggs (C–D), covering eggs with soil (E), and scattering leaves and sticks over the nest (F). Photographs by Amit Sayyed.

ful (Das 1999). Nesting and clutch size were described by Smith (1935), Deraniyagala (1953), Das and de Silva (2005), and Gabadage et al. (2009), the latter documenting ovipositional behavior using sketches. According to those sources, the female digs a hole about 70 mm deep, deposits 5–12 eggs from April to September that incubate for 79–84 days. According to Gabadage et al. (2009), a gravid female lies parallel to the ground, places the posterior part of her body over the opening of the nest with the tail coiled around the outer margin of the hole, and deposits eggs that range in size from 18.0–18.5 x 12.0–12.5 mm without lifting the hindlimbs.

At about 0900 h on 27 February 2021 in the Dance Forest near the Siruvani Waterfall, Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu, India (10.937°N, 76.684°E, ca. 840 m asl), we observed a gravid female *Calotes calotes* clearing leaf litter in a sunny location in an otherwise shaded area near a path (Fig. 1A). About 10 min later (~ 0927 h), she began digging, using all four limbs one after the other to throw the soil backward under her raised body (Fig. 1B) until she had excavated a somewhat oval funnel-shaped hole 145 x 129 mm wide at the surface, 138 mm deep, and 74 x 63 mm at the base. At 1352 h she placed her lower body about 90 mm above the base of the nest with her tail coiled at the base and extending out of the burrow and began depositing eggs at about 1349 h (Figs. 1C–D). At this time, air temperature was 26 °C, relative humidity 42%, barometer 1,011 mbar, and wind velocity 8 km/h. Time elapsed between each egg ranged from 30 sec to 1.3 min; a total of 32 min were required to deposit 14 eggs. We measured two eggs (18.3 x 12.7 mm and 18.6 x 12.8 mm) without disturbing the female. After depositing the eggs, the female began covering the eggs with soil and tapping the soil with the tip of her snout (Fig. 1E). When the nest was completely filled, she scattered a few

dry leaves and small sticks, presumably to hide it from predators (Fig. 1F). The female subsequently remained at the nest for almost 5 min before climbing a small bush about 3 m away to rest. The entire process took nearly 6 h. We did not observe any changes in the female's color at any time during this period nor did we observe any males in the vicinity.

Based on observations during our surveys, ovipositioning by *C. calotes* appears to peak in January–March, and hatchlings are most frequently encountered in April–July.

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