



Occurrence of the East Indian Leopard Gecko, *Eublepharis hardwickii* Gray 1827, in the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary and Saranda Forest in Jharkhand, India

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Angals et al. (2018) recorded 231 species of lizards in India with common names and IUCN status. The family Eublepharidae comprises 44 species distributed in parts of North and Central America, western and eastern Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and the Malay Archipelago (Smith 1935; Grismer 1988; Uetz et al. 2023). Eublepharids are medium-sized to large nocturnal surface foragers. The East Indian Leopard Gecko, *Eublepharis hardwickii* Gray 1827, is a medium-sized gecko found in West Bengal, Orissa (Dutta et al. 2009), Bihar, Uttar Pradesh (Tikader and Sharma 1992; Uetz et al. 2023), and Jharkhand (Dasgupta and Raha 2004; Prakash et al. 2014), Madhya Pradesh (Khajuria 1986; Tikader and Sharma 1992; Sharma 2002; Chandra and Gajbe 2005), West Bengal (Tikader and Sharma 1992), and Tamil Nadu (Uetz et al. 2023).

The Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary is in Jamshedpur and Saranda Forests in West Singhbhum in Jharkhand, which has

a tropical climate. Average annual rainfall is 945–1,297 mm with the greatest rainfall in August and temperatures range from 6 °C to 47 °C. The Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary (22.775 N 86.054 E to 22.950 N, 86.442 E; average elevation 914 m asl), located 10 km from the city of Jamshedpur and sharing borders with the Purulia District of West Bengal, is characterized by thick forests that extend over an area of 193 km². The forests are classified as Dry Peninsular Sal Forest and show properties of northern Dry Mixed Deciduous Forest (Champion and Seth 1968). The rain-fed Subernarekha River flows near the Sanctuary. The Saranda Forest, which is Asia’s largest Sal (*Shorea robusta*) forest, shares borders with Orissa, and is intersected by the Karo and Koina Rivers, extends over ~820 km² (22.013, 85.139 to 22.210, 85.410). Sasangada Buru is the highest hill range with a maximum elevation of 927 m asl.

At 2220 h on 12 June 2017, while investigating herpetofaunal diversity in the Saranda Forest, four live lizards were



Figure 1. An East Indian Leopard Gecko (*Eublepharis hardwickii*) (KUDA 14509) crawling on a rock in the Saranda Forest, Baraiburu, Jharkhand, India (left) and a dead juvenile (KUDA 14508) found near the Makulakocho Forest Rest House in the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary, Jharkhand, India (right). Photographs by Rahul Kumar.

encountered in a single night search close to the Baraiburu Forest Guest House (22.1560 N, 85.357 E; elev. 418 m asl). At 2100 h on 24 April 2018, a single individual was observed crawling on rocks at the B.B. Mines excavation site (Fig. 1). At ~1100 h on 13 April 2018, a dead juvenile was found surrounded by ants that were feasting on the carcass near the Makulakocha Forest Rest House in the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary (22.911 N, 86.140 E; elev. 233 m asl) (Fig. 1). The identity of these lizards was confirmed as *Eublepharis hardwickii* from photographs by Dr. Harsimran Singh and photographic vouchers have been deposited in the University of Kansas Digital Archives (KUDA 14508–9). These observations confirm the occurrence of East Indian Leopard Geckos in the Dalma and Saranda Forests. Further studies will need to assess the status of the species in the area, where major threats include habitat destruction due to mining in the Saranda Forest.

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