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Newsletter of the
Invertebrate Conservation & Information Network of South Asia (ICINSA)

Phrynus whitei (Gervais, 1842) from the type locality Burdwan is actually *Charinus bengalensis* (Gravely, 1911)



Charinus bengalensis sighted in Ramnabagan WS, Burdwan, West Bengal, India (© Ayan Mondal).

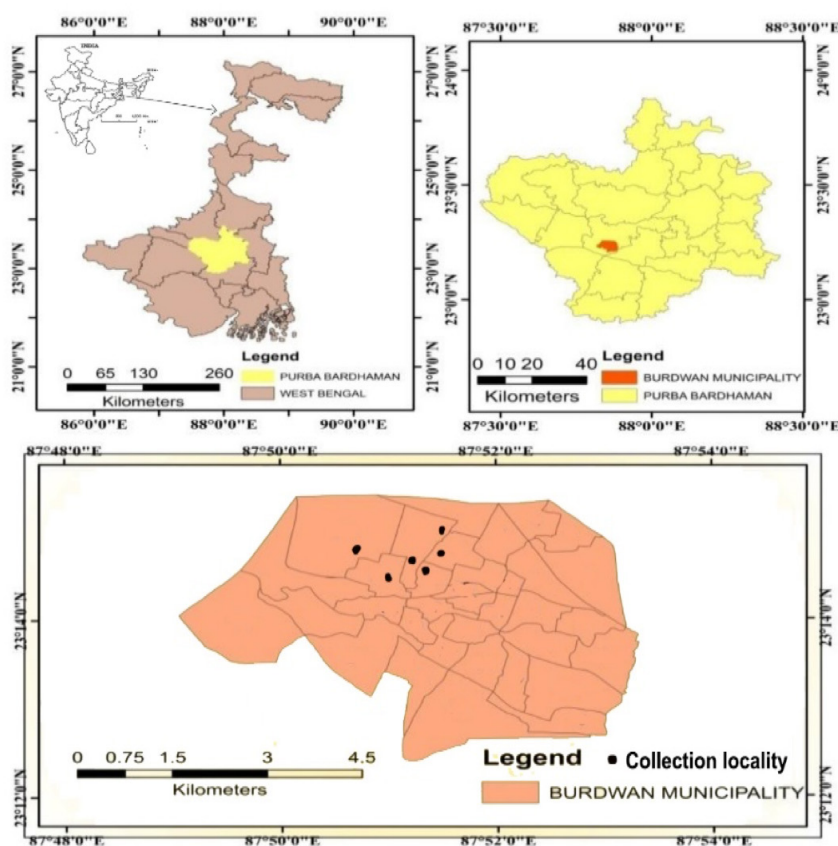
Amblypygi ('ambly' means 'blunt' and 'pygi' means 'rump'-denoting the absence of a tail) comprises one of the least diverse groups of Arachnida. According to the catalogues of Amblypygi (Harvey 2003, 2013), there are six species classified under two families which are present in India. The family Charinidae (Quintero 1986) comprises three species, *Charinus bengalensis* (Gravely, 1911), *Sarax cochinensis* (Gravely, 1915) and *Sarax sarawakensis* (Thorell, 1888) and two subspecies of *S. cochinensis* (Gravely,

1915), i.e., *S. cochinensis bispinosus* (Nair, 1934), and *S. cochinensis cochinensis* (Gravely, 1915). The family Phrynichidae (Simon, 1892) includes *Phrynichus andhraensis* (Bastawade et al., 2005), *Phrynichus nigrimanus* (C.L. Koch, 1847) and *Phrynichus phipsoni* (Pocock, 1894). *Phrynus whitei* (Gervais, 1842) is not listed as an Indian species in the catalogue (Harvey 2003, 2013) though its type locality was mentioned as Burdwan, India originally.

Rigorous opportunistic surveys were carried out in Burdwan (23.2324°N &

BugsRAll

Newsletter of the Invertebrate Conservation & Information Network of South Asia (ICINSA)



Burdwan town in Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal, India.

87.8615°E), to study the lesser known arachnid diversity. We found some Amblypygi specimens from Ramnabagan Wildlife Sanctuary, Burdwan on 23rd January 2018. During the eight surveys conducted over a period of two years, we were able to find only one morphospecies.

Phrynus whitei was described from material

collected by Maj. Gen. Thomas Hardwicke (Hardwicke 1756, 1835) with locality label mentioned as Burdwan. However, its present distribution is in Texas, California (Pocock 1894, 1902), Nicaragua (Kraepelin 1895, 1899), Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Guatemala (Quintero 1981), restricted to the New World. Pocock mentioned that only

one specimen was available in the British Museum of Natural History (BMNH) from which *P. whitei* was described. He also stated the collection locality of the holotype was erroneously labelled “Burdwan, India”. To verify this, we examined our specimen and compared it with the descriptions of *P. whitei* provided by various authors (Gervais 1842; Pocock 1894, 1902; Kraepelin 1895, 1899; Quintero 1981). After careful examination we found that our specimen did not bear characters of the genus *Phrynus*, i.e., 3rd dorsal spine shorter than 2nd and 4th (Harvey 2002) but that of the genus *Charinus*, characterized by the dorsal spine length arranged in descending order from 1st to the last (Weygoldt 2000). The only *Charinus* species found in West Bengal, India is *C. bengalensis* (Gravely 1911). Our specimen matched impeccably with the descriptions by Gravely (1911) and other

Bugs R All

Newsletter of the
Invertebrate Conservation & Information Network of South Asia (ICINSA)

subsequent literature (Gravely 1915; Quintero 1986). We therefore conclude that the type specimen of *P. whitei* as previously mentioned by Pocock is “erroneously ticketed”. All the specimens collected from Burdwan, West Bengal are in fact, *Charinus bengalensis*.

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