



# An overview of the Little Tree Frog records from the Western Ghats and a report of a new locality record

*Rhacophorus lateralis* was described by Boulenger (1883) based on a single male specimen (BMNH 82.2.10.75) from “Malabar” deposited at the British Museum. No further collections were available until Das (2000) rediscovered the species from Coorg, Karnataka with two voucher specimens (ZSI A9071 and ZSI A9072). Das (2000) also removed the species from provisional synonymy with *Rhacophorus malabaricus* Jerdon, 1870 proposed by Wolf (1936).

This species was considered to be very rare, documented from Wayanad (Biju 2000) and Periyar Tiger Reserve in Kerala (Easa 2003; Daniels 2005). In 2004, the IUCN Red Listed this species as ‘Endangered’ and considered its range to be restricted to two small areas of Wayanad and Coorg in central Western Ghats of India (Biju et al. 2004). However, several new localities were reported recently from Kerala and Karnataka (Molur & Molur 2010; Dinesh et al. 2010) including a few natural history observations (Biju 2009; Goel & Goel 2010; Sachi & Dinesh 2015; Princy et al. 2017). Apart from the published report (Princy et al. 2017), there were also reports of this species from Nilgiris in Inaturalist.org ([https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?taxon\\_id=26494](https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?taxon_id=26494)), with one report as close as 10 km from the newly reporting location. Although they are not scientifically published, reports in



Type locality of *Rhacophorus lateralis* in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve © K. Narasimmarajan

the citizen science portals are very important and are used for scientific publications and cannot be ignored. Hence, this record has a significant merit of record from dry deciduous locality along the river Moyar. But we tried to provide an overview of this taxon’s status from Tamil Nadu by including all these records mentioned from Inaturalist.org.

On 14 March 2016, at 1313 h, a single adult male of *Rhacophorus lateralis* (SVL = 11.6 cm) was observed fallen from a *Maginifera indica* tree from about 15 m height along the river Moyar (11.574 °N, 76.564 °E; 868 m) in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Western Ghats, India. The individual was identified as an adult male owing to its large size and presence of

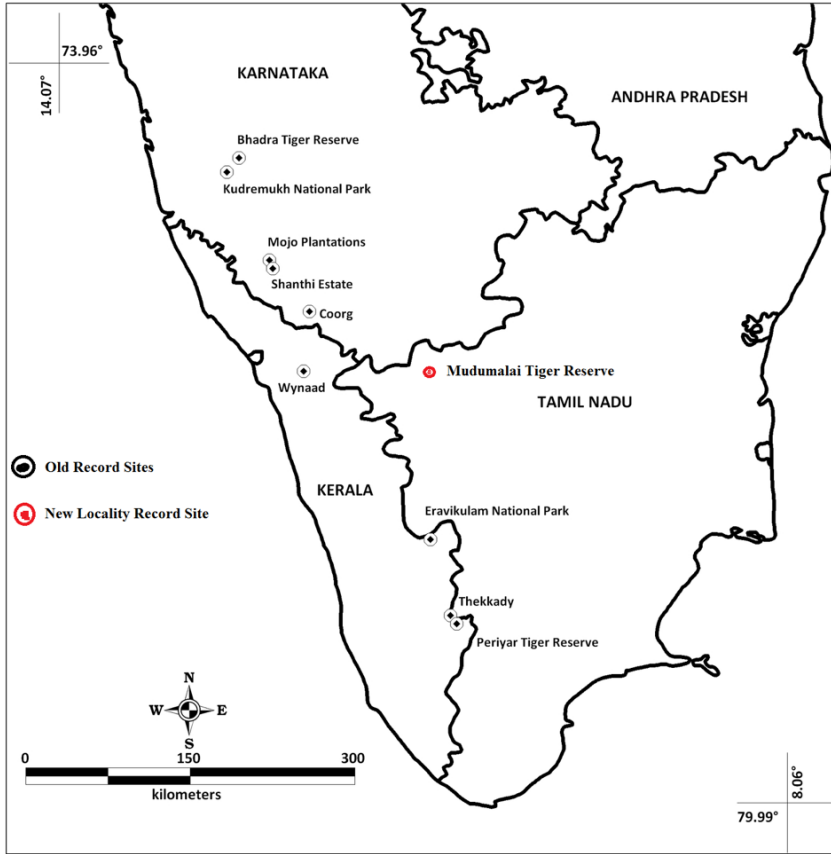


***Rhacophorus lateralis* colour-changing ability**

nuptial pads and vocal sac (male secondary sexual characters). The habitat was characterized by lowland tropical deciduous with riparian forest formation with sparsely covered canopy dominated by *Bambusa bambos* and *Lantana camera*.

The colour of the individual was noted to be lime green with blue dots on its dorsum

with metallic yellow lateral stripes running from eye to groin and thin blue stripes on its legs, but as soon as it was placed on a rock for taking photographs, the dorsal and leg coloration started to change. In a span of a few minutes, the colour changed from green to dull brown, increasing the contrast with background and making the animal



highly conspicuous. The leg colour became reddish and finger webs and toes became orange.

It took approximately 10 minutes for the frog to change its color from green to brownish with reddish legs. The initial colour change from lime green to brown was faster but the time taken was not accurately quantified. Our understanding regarding colour-changing ability, factors influencing the behaviour and its adaptive function in anurans are currently limited by a dearth

**Rhacophorus lateralis records in Western Ghats**

**Table 1. Collection/sight localities of *Rhacophorus lateralis* in the Western Ghats.**

Collection localities	Latitude (N)	Longitude (E)	Date/ Year of sighting	Source/ Year of publication
<b>Karnataka</b>				
Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary, Chikkamagaluru District	13.018	75. 27	12.viii.2006	Dinesh et al. 2010
Kudremukh National Park, Chikkamagaluru District	13.011	75.021	25.vii.2008	Dinesh et al. 2010
Mojo Plantation, Coorg District	12.028	75.042	2007–2009	Goel & Goel 2010
Shanthi Estate, Coorg District	12.024	75.044	May 2005	Molur & Molur 2010
Luckunda Estate, Coorg District	12.003	76.002	1998	Bennet et al. 1998; Das 2000
<b>Kerala</b>				
Kalpetta, Wayanad District	11.034	75.059	1997 & April 2005	Dinesh et al. 2010; Biju et al. 2013
Eravikulam National Park, Idukki District	10.012	77.002	4.iii.1995	Dinesh et al. 2010
Thekkady, Idukki District	09.035	77.012	Not available	Easa 2003
Periyar, Idduki District	09.031	77.015	1990	Biju 2000; Daniels 2005
<b>Tamil Nadu</b>				
Mudumalai Tiger Reserve	11.574	76..564	14.iii.2016	Present report
Ovalley, Nilgiri District	-	-	-	Princy et al. 2017
Nilgiris	-	-	-	www.inaturalist.org



of natural history observations and carefully designed experimental studies (Deepak et al. 2019).

The species is being reported here for the first time from the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve; earlier records being Gudalur just 10 km away from the present report (Table 1) but the habitat was completely dry deciduous and furthermore westward known distribution in Coorg and Wayanad regions are completely wet (Goel & Goel 2010; Dinesh et al. 2010).

Our observation gives an insight to the researchers to understand more about the species distribution and its adaptability towards various habitat guilds. It appears that the species probably has wider distribution range than what was known to us so far in the Western Ghats.

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