



Endangered Forest Spotted Gecko observed in Sevapur Forest, Tamil Nadu, India

The Forest Spotted Gecko *Cyrtodactylus speciosus* is a terrestrial, nocturnal, forest-dwelling, secretive and is one of the least known of Indian geckoes (Smith 1935). This species was first described from Erode, and subsequently has been sighted in hills around Coimbatore, Tirupur, Salem, Namakkal, Tirupathur, Theni, Madurai, and Dindigul districts, in parts of the Eastern Ghats and the Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu (Gupta 1998; Bhupathy & Sathishkumar 2013; Agarwal et al. 2016; Ganesh & Arumugam 2016; Chaitanya et al. 2018; Ganesh et al. 2020). It is a terrestrial insectivorous lizard that lives on the ground amongst thick leaf litter and pebbles and particles on a number of the wooded area floor. This gecko is associated with dry deciduous forest and scrubland at the foot of hills. It



Forest Spotted Gecko observed from Sevapur Forest in Karur District.
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occurs at elevations of 300 to 650 m (Smith 1935; Agarwal et al. 2016).

Cyrtodactylus speciosus is characterised by a typical colour pattern consisting of the following configuration on the head dorsum (two interorbital spots and elongated central occipital streak longer than the two occipital spots), dorsal trunk (two dark bands from behind occiput to between

hindlimb insertion, one beginning behind forelimb insertion and the last ending just above the hindlimb insertion, lighter interspaces bands, three pairs of dark spots between limb insertions) and tail (Agarwal et al. 2016). This is a species complex that has a tricky taxonomy, where the type specimen is somewhat damaged (Agarwal et al. 2016) and the species hasn't been found from the original locality



Erode, yet. This species is listed as 'Endangered' on the IUCN Red List (Achyuthan et al. 2021).

The present note reports the published occurrence of the Forest Spotted Gecko for the first time in the Sevapur forest area (10.580N, 78.156E; 375 m) in Karur District, Tamil Nadu. During the Slender Loris census in the Sevapur Forest area on 26 February 2022, a live gecko was sighted during the field visit wherein it was seen to be well-camouflaged on the ground with leaf-litter. Then we observed closely and photographed the gecko for enabling a better identification and independent verification of our sighting. The present report is the first photographic record of the Forest Spotted Gecko in the Karur District.

Surveys on the reptile fauna of these hills are rare and the nearest place from where it was reported, is Sirumalai hills as *C. cf. speciosus* (Ganesh & Arumugam 2016). Studies including specimen collections and DNA analysis are necessary to fully identify this population. This species is very little-known, with no published information on its habits, natural history, biological traits and so on. Further studies and field observations are very much recommended to fully understand its biology.

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