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Newsletter of the
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Short note on the occurrence of the African Giant Snail in Chennai, Tamil Nadu

Lissachatina fulica Bowdich commonly known as the Giant African Snail (GAS) is a global invasive predator native to the eastern coast of Africa. In India, GAS was initially introduced in Calcutta by a renowned malacologist W.H. Benson in 1847 (Srivastava 1992). Since then, the species has spread widely and has been reported across several southern states of India, including Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. In Tamil Nadu, *L. fulica* has been observed in multiple districts, such as Chennai, Chidambaram, Coimbatore, and Chengalpattu (Raut & Ghose 1984). The GAS being a generalist species consumes over 500 plant species and has consistently been listed among the '100 Worst Alien Invasive Species' (Lowe et al. 2000; Invasive Species Specialist Group 2012). This emphasizes the need for documenting the spread of *L. fulica* and assessing its ecological impacts. Such efforts are particularly critical in regions like Chennai District, where detailed records remain sparse since the initial observation by Raut & Ghose (1984).

***Lissachatina fulica* observed in Chennai. © Phillmon Smart Edward.**

The distribution records of *L. fulica* were collected during

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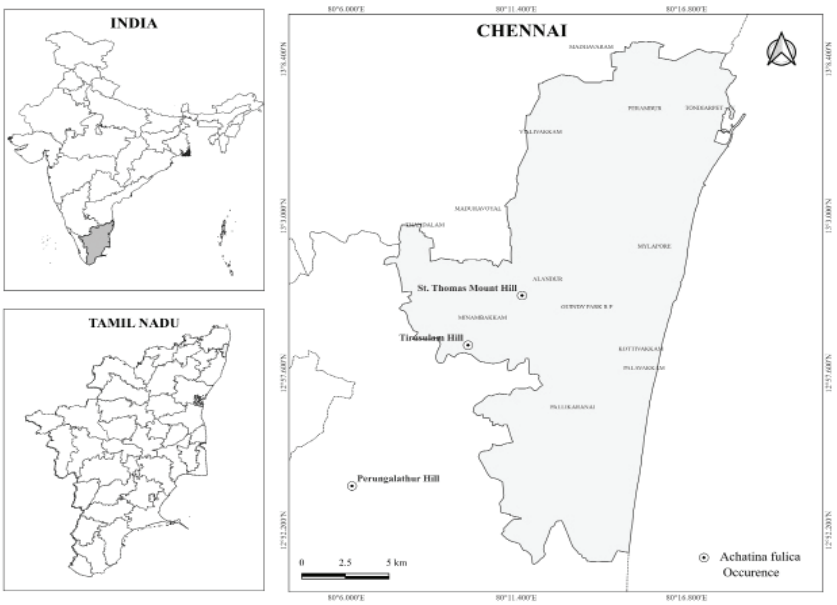

GPS points of the distribution records of *Lissachatina fulica* in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

opportunistic sampling conducted from September to November 2024 in Chennai District, Tamil Nadu. Field surveys were carried out across various urban and semi-urban locations, based on accessibility and visual confirmation of the species. GPS coordinates of the observed individuals were recorded using a handheld GPS device with an accuracy of ±3 meters. Populations of *L. fulica* were confirmed at three key locations: St. Thomas Mount (13.0047 N, 80.1931 E), Tirusulam (12.976209 N, 80.164528 E), and Perungalathur Hills (12.895543 N, 80.103184 E). These areas, characterized by moderate vegetation and varying degrees of human activity, highlight the presence and adaptability of this invasive species within the district.

This invasive gastropod serves as an intermediate host for several parasitic nematodes, including zoonotic species such as *Angiostrongylus cantonensis* and *A. costaricensis*, which cause eosinophilic meningoencephalitis and abdominal angiostrongyliasis, respectively (Alicata 1991; Cowie 2013). These infections, often transmitted through ingestion of contaminated gastropods or their residues, pose significant public health risks in regions where the snail has established populations (Graeff-Teixeira et al. 2009).

Chennai, a densely populated metropolitan city in Tamil Nadu, faces significant risks from the presence of *L. fulica*, a vector for zoonotic diseases like *eosinophilic meningoencephalitis*, which poses serious public health concerns (Cowie 2013). The city's susceptibility to flooding during the monsoon season (Radhakrishnan et al. 2024) further exacerbates the spread of infections, as floodwaters disperse snails and contaminate resources. This risk is heightened during the rainy winter months when snails emerge from hibernation (Schweizer et al. 2019). Therefore, these factors emphasize the urgent need for a comprehensive population survey of *L. fulica* in Chennai.

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This should be followed by effective monitoring and management strategies to mitigate the associated health and ecological threats.

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