

A new record of the Thomisidae spider *Phrynarachne ceylonica* from Garbhanga Reserve Forest, Assam, India

The family Thomisidae Sundevall, 1833, is a diverse group of ambush predators represented by 210 species under 44 genera in India, with about 68% endemism (Singh & Singh 2021). Within Thomisidae, the genus *Phrynarachne* Thorell, 1869 is remarkable for its extreme masquerade strategy, with species mimicking bird droppings as camouflage (Roy et al. 2010). These spiders are considered among the rarest worldwide, with 37 species known (World Spider Catalog 2026). Historical records in India indicate that only four species are included in the genus *Phrynarachne*: *P. ceylonica* (O. Pickard-Cambridge, 1884); *P. tuberosa* (Blackwall, 1864); *P. peiliana* (Stoliczka, 1869) and *P. decipiens* (Forbes, 1884) (Das et al. 2024). *Phrynarachne*



Phrynarachne ceylonica. © Monish Kumar Thapa.

ceylonica was first described from Sri Lanka (Pickard-Cambridge, 1884), with later reports from China, Taiwan, and Japan. Simon (1895) mentioned its presence in India, but without a proper description. After more than a century, Das et al. (2019) confirmed the species in India for the first time from Sonapur,

Assam, describing a specimen larger than those from east Asia and suggesting geographic size variation. Despite this richness, large parts of Guwahati, Assam remain poorly surveyed.

The present note records *Phrynarachne ceylonica* for the first time from Garbhanga

Reserve Forest, Assam, adding a third confirmed locality for India and extending its known distribution within the state.

On 7 September 2025, five individuals of *P. ceylonica* were sighted during a biodiversity walk in Garbhanga Reserve Forest, Kamrup District, Assam (26.0811° N, 91.7694° E, 167.4 m) at approximately 0941 h. The specimen was observed in its natural habitat resting on a leaf of *Ficus hispida*. Identification was based on its characteristic body shape, coloration, and resemblance to bird droppings, consistent with published descriptions (Das et al. 2019; Zhu & Song 2006). The individuals were documented through photographs.

The spider exhibits a dark brownish-grey opisthosoma with prominent tubercles, irregular markings, and a distinct posture resembling bird droppings, which aids its masquerade strategy.

This spider species has been recorded from Sri Lanka, China, Taiwan, Japan (Dash & Sivaperuman 2021), as well as from India, including Assam (Sonapur) and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Dash & Sivaperuman 2021). The present study adds a new record from Garbhanga Reserve Forest.

This finding represents the third confirmed record of *P. ceylonica* from the country and the

second modern locality in Assam after Sonapur (Das et al. 2019). Its detection at a new site suggests that the species may be more widely distributed but often overlooked due to its cryptic bird-dung mimicry.

The Garbhanga sighting fits this pattern, demonstrating the persistence of a species that had remained unreported in India for more than a century. Singh & Singh (2021) recorded 17 Thomisidae species from Assam, including other Phrynarachne members. The addition of *P. ceylonica* from Garbhanga expands this list and highlights the underexplored arachnid diversity of Assam's forests. Given the high endemism of Indian Thomisidae and the ongoing habitat loss, systematic surveys are imperative to ascertain the true diversity and ecological function of these spiders.

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