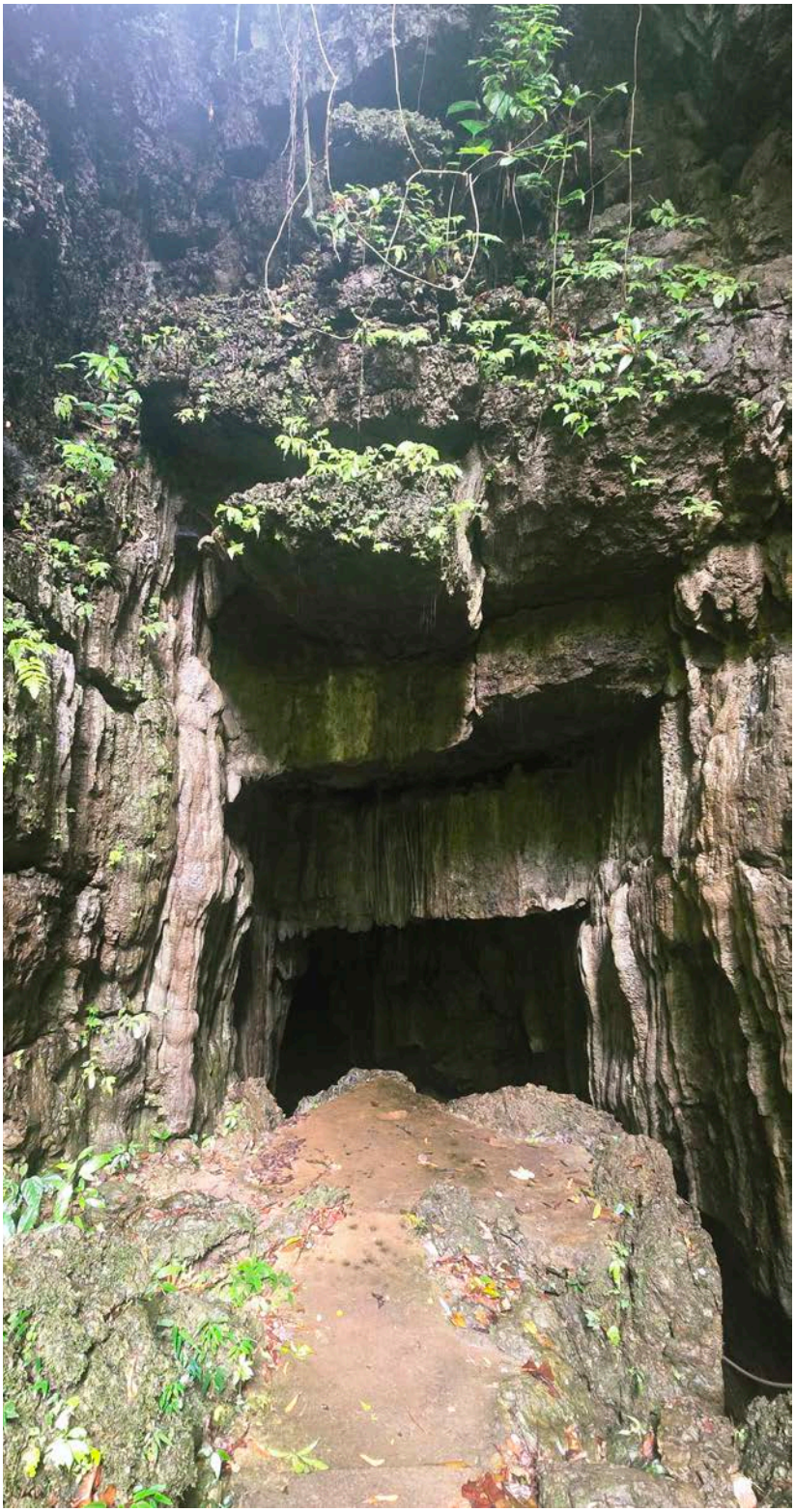
Record of *Amolops siju* from Syndai Cave in Meghalaya, India

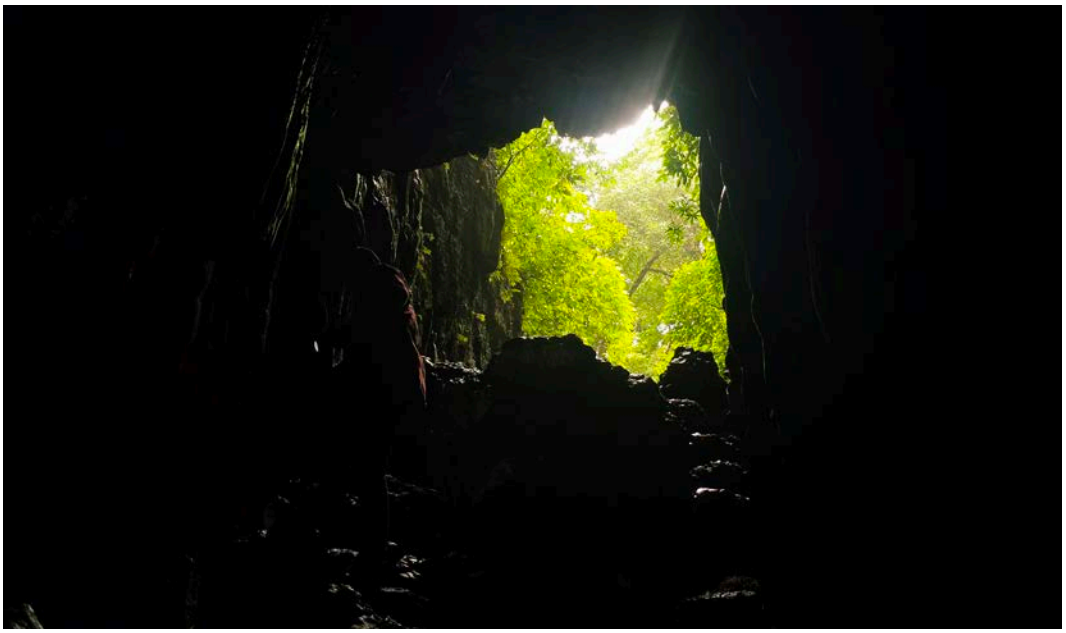
Syndai Cave (25.1815° N; 92.1375° E) nestled in the picturesque East Jaintia Hills District of Meghalaya in northeastern India is a fascinating geological wonder that showcases the region's rich natural heritage. This limestone cave, located near the scenic village of Syndai, is known for its striking stalactites and stalagmites, which have formed over thousands of years of erosion, creating a mesmerising unique subterranean landscape (Daly 2013).

The cave once offered an adventurous exploration opportunity for tourists and speleologists but has long been abandoned for a couple of decades providing an opportunity for local biodiversity to thrive. Additionally, surrounding the cave, the lush greenery and serene environment add to its allure, making Syndai Cave a hidden gem for faunal documentation.

A recent visit to Syndai Cave in the month of October 2025, for documentation of various biota of this unique ecosystem led to the observation of a large-sized green frog belonging to



Entrance of Syndai Cave. © Bankerdonbor Kharbisnop.



View of the entrance of Syndai Cave from inside. © Bankerdonbor Kharbisnop.

An adult female of *Amolops siju* from Syndai Cave. © Bankerdonbor Kharbisnop.

the genus *Amolops*. The frog was observed and photographed ¬*in-sit*u (no collection was made) which was sitting atop the cave wall at ca. 1.5 m from the cave floor, ca. 50 m from the cave entrance. The frog exhibited distinct morphological characters of *Amolops siju*, such as large-sized body; dorsal and lateral colouration olive-green with irregular blotches; limbs distinctly banded with alternating greenish-yellow and brown bands, all of which are in accordance with the original description of the species by Saikia et al. (2023).

Most notably, Saikia et al. (2023) distinguished *A. siju* from its congeners by the presence of an extremely small tympanum (one-fifth of the eye diameter), which is distinctly visible in the photographed specimen from Syndai Cave. Saikia et al. (2023) highlighted that in females of this species the tympanum is separated from the eye by a distance of less than twice its diameter, as observed in the image.

Contrastingly, in males the tympanum is separated from the eye by a distance greater than twice its diameter. Based on this

distinguishing character, the individual was identified as an adult female of *A. siju*.

The genus *Amolops* is made up of rheophilic, stream-dwelling frogs that are found throughout the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot, the Himalaya, and southern & eastern China (Frost 2025). However, Saikia et al. (2023) described *A. siju* from Siju cave, a limestone cave located in the south Garo Hills district of Meghalaya, separated from Syndai by ca. 200 km aerial distance with no known subterranean connectivity. Despite being a cascade dwelling genus, Saikia et al. (2023) did remark that *A. siju* lacked any cave adapted modification and raised the possibility that it would have a much wider distribution. As of now, its range is restricted to its type locality.

Besides this frog, we also observed other cave biota such as Huntsman Spider *Heteropoda* sp., Potamid Cave Crab, Rhaphidophorid Cave Cricket and Cave Millipede during the field visit. Further biospeleological explorations are needed to understand the cave biota of Syndai.

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