

## OCCURRENCE OF *ARGIOPE LOBATA* (PALLAS, 1772) IN ROLLAPADU WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, ANDHRA PRADESH

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**web supplement**

Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary (15°58'N & 78°18'E), located in the Kurnool District of Andhra Pradesh is world renowned as home to two endangered species of birds, namely the Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*) and the Lesser Florican (*Sypheotides indica*). The first author has been monitoring and documenting the fauna of the Sanctuary since 1998. In December 2000, the first author sighted an unidentified *Argiope* sp. in the grasslands of Cherukucherla near the Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary. Later, the sighting frequency of this species increased and it was also noted within the Sanctuary. In the past three years quite a few individuals of this *Argiope* sp. were sighted. Careful observation of a live specimen encountered and the study of the photograph revealed that the species encountered by us was *Argiope lobata* (Pallas, 1772). A photo voucher of the same (NHM.OU/ARACH 2003 1P) has been deposited in the Natural History Museum of Department of Zoology, Osmania University, Hyderabad (see Image 1<sup>w</sup>).

*Argiope lobata* (Pallas, 1772) is the only species of genus *Argiope* consisting of a caudal process, three large and two smaller tubercles on the abdomen. Carapace black with silky white pubescence. Dorsum of the abdomen is golden yellow to orange with transverse black patches between the tubercles and caudal process. Ventral side provided with U-shaped orange patch between epigynal region and spinnerets.

*Argiope lobata* (Pallas, 1772) is an uncommon species of the genus *Argiope* and generally found in grassland habitats. A total of seven individuals of this species (three individuals within the Sanctuary and four individuals outside the Sanctuary) were sighted between December 2000 and March 2003. Interestingly, all the specimens sighted were female specimens and search for the male specimens proved futile. The webs were about 0.6-1.2m above ground and were more often on, but not restricted to, *Agave* sp. One web was observed stretched between *Zizyphus mauritiana* and *Phoenix sylvestris*. The web diameter ranged between 0.45-1.3m, with a 'x' shaped stabilimentum across the centre or hub of the web.

This species is a 'wait and watch' type of predator that feeds on a variety of insects. It waits in the centre of the web for its prey to get entangled, then rushes to the spot, injects venom

and starts wrapping the insect with silk (swathing bands) to make a cocoon-like structure. This mode of swathing the prey with silk ensures retention of moisture in the prey as the webs are constructed in places exposed to direct sunlight. When hungry, the spider moves the wrapped-up prey to the hub of the web to feed on. Exuvia of grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, moths, dragonflies were collected from the webs.

Recently, *Argiope arcuata* Simon, 1884 was synonymised with *Argiope lobata* (Pallas, 1772) by Levi (1983). Pocock (1900) reported the occurrence of *Argiope* (= *Argiope*) *arcuata* Simon, 1884 in India from Poona (=Pune), East Khandesh (=Jalgaon Dist. in Maharashtra), Bangalore and in Burma (=Myanmar) from Minhla. Tikader (1961, 1963) also reported *Argiope arcuata* Simon, 1884 from Bikaner in Rajasthan and Ahmednagar in Maharashtra in India and indicated its occurrence in Arabia. The present day known distribution range of *Argiope arcuata* Simon, 1884 includes Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and West Bengal (Tikader, 1982; Biswas & Biswas, 1992). Our sighting of *Argiope lobata* (Pallas, 1772) from Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary and the surrounding grassland patches is the first report of its occurrence from Andhra Pradesh.

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<sup>w</sup> See Image 1 of the spider on the web at [www.zoosprint.org](http://www.zoosprint.org)

