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NEW SITE RECORDS OF THE MALABAR TREE TOAD, *PEDOSTIBES TUBERCULOSUS* GUNTHER (AMPHIBIA : ANURA : BUFONIDAE), IN WESTERN GHATS, INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

The Tree Toad, *Pedostibes tuberculosus* (Amphibia : Anura : Bufonidae), was described by Gunther (1875) from "Malabar", Kerala, India. However, its distribution within the Malabar zone remained ill defined for a long time. After a span of 105 years since its original description, a single specimen of the species was collected by S. K. Bhattacharya on 15-i-1980 from the Silent Valley National Park (lat. 11° 05' N and long. 76° 26' E), Palakkad district, Kerala (Pillai, 1986). This critically endangered toad was subsequently recorded from Ponmudi (lat. 8° 45' N and long. 77° 8' E), Thiruvananthapuram district (Inger *et al.*, 1984) in Kerala; Cotegao Wildlife Sanctuary (lat. 15° 30' N and long. 73° 55' E), in Goa (Das and Whitaker, 1998); Kalakkad (lat. 8° 30' N and long. 77° 33' E), Tirunelveli district in Tamil Nadu (Biju, 2001); Mollem (lat 15° 22' N and long. 74° 12' E), Goa (Dahanukar, *et al.*, 2004); and at Jakkaganagadde (lat. 13° 51' N and long. 75° 04' E), Sharavathi River basin, Shimoga district in Karnataka (Gururaja and Ramachandra, 2006). Biju (2001) quoting Das and Whitaker (1990), states that *Pedostibes tuberculosus* has also been reported from Vanjikadavu in Kerala. However, the paper of Das and Whitaker (1990) does not deal with that species at all.

On 10th May 2005, during a faunistic survey tour to the Wayanad district in Kerala, we could collect a specimen of the toad, well known for its phytotelmatic mode of life, from a tree hole at a height of about 12 feet from the ground level in a Shola forest at Vannathimala (lat. 11° 34' N and long. 75° 59' E) (V/A 577). Again on 24th October 2005, we were able to collect a juvenile specimen of the species from a fallen tree in an evergreen forest at Bhagavathi forest range (lat. 13° 19' N and long. 75° 09' E) of Kudremukh National Park, in Karnataka (V/A 578). Subsequently on

24th April 2007 we could collect a specimen from Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary (lat. 11° 57' N and long. 75° 46' E), Kannur, Kerala (V/A 629).

We could determine the specific identity of these three specimens (Fig. 1) as *Pedostibes tuberculosus* Gunther based on the following diagnostic features assigned to the taxon (Daniel, 1963) in scientific literature : A slender, small toad with the tips of fingers and toes dilated into truncated discs; tympanum distinct, 1/3 diameter of eye; parotoids present; fingers webbed at base, first finger half the length of the second; toes almost fully webbed; skin of back tubercular with the largest tubercles in two rows on the sides of back; colour brownish grey above with darker sides; a white band from below the eye to the shoulder and another on the flank; below whitish spotted with black.

The species is being reported here for the first time from Vannathimala, Wayanad; Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary, Kannur in Kerala and the Kudremukh National Park in Karnataka. The specimens studied are deposited in the faunal depository of the Western Ghats Field Research Station, Zoological Survey of India, Calicut and their morphometric data is provided in Table 1.

Table 1 : Morphometric data of *Pedostibes tuberculosus* Gunther.

ZSI/WGRFS/V/A	577	578	629
Snout-vent length	47.0	18.0	35.0
Width of body behind shoulder	13.0	5.0	9.0
Head length	11.0	4.2	11.0
Head width	14.0	5.2	13.0
Head depth	6.0	3.0	5.6
Eye diameter	4.5	2.5	4.2
Interorbital distance	8.2	4.0	6.5
Internarial distance	3.0	1.4	2.6
Diameter of Tympanum	2.0	1.2	1.6
Eye-snout tip distance	6.0	3.0	5.2
Eye-nostril distance	4.0	1.8	3.8
Hand length	19.0	13.0	18.0
First finger length	4.0	2.0	3.0
Second finger length	5.0	3.0	4.0

Incidentally, the specimen collected by us from Wayanad turned out to be the largest specimen of the species so far known with a snout to vent length of 47 mm, against 39.8 mm recorded earlier (Dahanukar *et al.*, 2004).

Daniels (2005) stated that *Pedostibes tuberculosus* is patchily distributed from Maharashtra to Kerala. However, its distribution in Maharashtra is yet to be ascertained as Dhanukumar *et al.*, (2004) states that a very similar tree toad inhabits the forests at Koyna (Maharashtra state) but may in fact represent another, as yet undescribed species of *Pedostibes*. Based on our present collection, and the earlier records, it appears that the species may occur in all the wet forest stretches of Western Ghats from 8° 30' – 15° 30' N latitudes Table 2 (Fig. 2).

Table 2 : Collection localities for *P. tuberculosus* in Western Ghats.

Sl. No.	Collection localities	Latitude (N)	Longitude (E)	Year of report
1	Cotegao Wildlife Sanctuary	15° 30'	73° 55'	Das and Whitaker, 1998
2	Mollem	15° 22'	74° 12'	Dahanukar, <i>et al.</i> , 2004
3	Jakkanagadde	13° 51'	75° 04'	Gururaja and Ramachandra, 2006
4	Kudremukh National Park	13° 19'	75° 09'	Present report
5	Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary	11° 57'	75° 46'	Present report
6	Vannathimala	11° 34'	75° 59'	Present report
7	Silent Valley National Park	11° 05'	76° 26'	Pillai, 1986
8	Ponmudi	8° 45'	77° 08'	Inger <i>et al.</i> , 1984
9	Kalakkad	8° 30'	77° 33'	Biju, 2001

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