

### Current Distribution Pattern, Ecology And Conservation Of *Calodaetylodes Illingworthorum* Deraniyagala, 1953 (Retilia: Gekkonidae: Gekkoninae) From Sri Lanka

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Geckos are found throughout the world and belong to one of the most species rich lizard families, second only to the skink. Geckos are the smallest, active and most primitive, living saurian lizards in Asia and other parts of the world. Sri Lanka represents 42 species which belong to 9 genera, while 31 (73 %) are endemic to the island. The gekkonid lizard genus *Calodaetylodes* Strand, 1926 is endemic to the peninsular India and Sri Lanka. Currently *Calodaetylodes* genus is represented by two species and those two species are very rare and use specific habitats in both countries. First species of the *Calodaetylodes* genus which described from Tripathy hill in India named as *C. aureus* in 1870 by Beddome is endemic to India. After 83 years the second species *C. illingworthorum* was described from Sri Lanka by Deraniyagala in 1953 from Nuwaragala and it is endemic and threatened.

This data collected by authors from January 2002 to April 2008, during random field visits in searching this species. Surveys were conducted both day and night and flashlights were used at night, during nearly six years covering the wet and dry seasons. We noted down the details of eggs, specimens, egg laying sites and cave counts. The specimens were hand captured alive, all the external measurements of the specimens were taken using a vernier caliper. Specimens were not collected, and released after recording data at the original location where they captured. According to our observations *C. illingworthorum* is restricted to eastern and southeastern parts of the dry zone and arid zone between about 125 m to 800 m above sea level of Sri Lanka. During our surveys we identified 94 important granite caves and out of these caves 77 locations represent egg-deposition sites. Among these egg-deposition sites we could count 1010 eggs. Totally 197 individuals were recorded during the study period.

These geckos use anthills and granite caves for hunting their preys. We have never found any individual from tree trunk; only in hermitages locate rarely some individuals from clay-walls. We observed the Tarantula (*Poecilotheria podersoni*) in the same habitat, but not seen any predatory behavior. We also observed cannibalism behavior of *C. illingworthorum* for two times. The villagers inhabit in the vicinity of Buddhist hermitages believe mythical stories of this endangered gecko. Therefore centering these temples, awareness programs should be conducted to abandon those myths. The microhabitats as well as macro habitats of this species are granite rocks. Therefore demolishing granite rocks as well as illegal forest eradications, chena cultivations and man made fire should be minimized by the government authorities. According to our observations there are considerable isolated, stable populations. However this species is the only one member representing this genus in Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** *Calodaetylodes illingworthorum*, gekkonidae, distribution pattern, ecology, conservation, Sri Lanka.