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RESPONSE

A PRELIMINARY BUT INCOMPLETE CHECKLIST OF GUJARAT SPIDERS

R.V. Vyas & B.M. Parasharya

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A PRELIMINARY BUT INCOMPLETE CHECKLIST OF GUJARAT SPIDERS

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The authors of the paper Yadav et al. (2017) should be congratulated for taking up this herculean task of compilation and documentation of existing information about the spider fauna of Gujarat State. Additional data generated through fresh survey during 2014-15 have enriched the checklist and distribution records within the state. On careful reading of this paper, we found that there are certain mistakes in the paper and omissions of certain published information. We draw attention of the authors and readers here to rectify the errors and prepare a fresh checklist.

The authors claim that there are 415 species belonging to 169 genera of 40 families. Out of these, 29 genera and 17 families are endemic to Gujarat. There is, however, no mention of which species/genera/family are endemic to Gujarat in the entire paper. If conclusions about endemism are correct, the authors have failed to highlight importance of Gujarat in spider species endemism.

The authors claim to have recorded 149 species belonging to 99 genera during their survey Of 2014-15 but Table 3 shows that at least 45 species are identified only up to the genus level. When such species are added into the checklist, it is presumed that they could be a new species to science.

The authors have shown eight agro-climatic zones of Gujarat which have been adopted from the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Government of Gujarat but the source for the same is not given. After looking at Map 1 and Table 1, one realizes that the zone numbers in the map and in the table do not match! Whether such a gross mistake is by the web site of Government of Gujarat or by the authors remains unknown. The zone names, sites covered and dominant flora shown in Table 1 appears to be of the authors and not of the Government website and hence it gives wrong information to the readers. The source of the content of Table 1 should have been mentioned clearly as the dominant flora and spider diversity shown here appears irrelevant. Evidences suggest that the authors are confused about the names of the agro-climatic zones (Table 1) and the numbers they have given on the map 1. According to the authors, 'The highest spider records were from the northwestern zone, which consists of Panchmahal and Vadodara.....'. According to the Table 1, the north-west zone is 8 where as Panchmahal and Vadodara falls under zone 3, middle Gujarat. The same mistake is repeated in Table 2 as most potential zone 2, 6 and 7 have very low numbers of species, which is not possible.

The Kachchh (Kutch) District – the second largest district of the country is climatically arid and located on the northwestern part of the state. Unfortunately, Kachchh District is not mentioned anywhere in Table 1.

All studies referred into this publication, except a few studies (Kumar & Shivakumar 2004; Trivedi 2009) were conducted in non-cultivated area. In spite of this, published records were classified into agro-climatic zones. Normally, occurrence/distribution of animal or plant species is viewed with respect to the biogeographic zones (Darlington 1980).

Omission of published information

In this paper, three unpublished Ph.D. Thesis of M.S. University of Baroda and one from Sardar Patel University are referred. The authors have not referred to the works carried out at other universities. The fact is that there are several Ph.D. Thesis submitted to M.K. Bhavnagar University (under the guidance of Dr. B.H. Patel & S.K. Patel), South Gujarat University and several



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M.Sc. Dissertations, which are not referred to. Had they been referred, several more species could have been added to the list.

Several published records are not referred in this paper, though some of them were published in reputed journals (Vasava et al. 2015; Parasharya & Pathan 2013; Parasharya et al. 2015; Parmar et al. 2014) and several other papers available on internet too. Unfortunately, one publication of M.S. University on spiders of Gir forests (Parikh et al. 2008) is also not referred.

Other comments

The authors have referred 'standard taxonomic literature', however, they have not mentioned which classification/ checklist of spiders was followed for this compilation. One wonders why updated checklist of the Indian spiders by Siliwal et al. (2005) was not referred. Under the family Araneidae, *Argiope arcuata* Simon, 1874 (Sr.no.9) is mentioned. This seems to have come from the Ph.D. Thesis of Patel (1971). Siliwal et al. (2005) do not separately list *A. arcuata* in their list; instead only *A. lobata* is listed and *A. arcuata* is shown as synonym of *A. lobata* (Pallas, 1772). One expects the latest version of the classification accepted by the Indian researchers.

One wonders why Anonymous (2009) was referred by the authors for compiling present checklist! Authenticity of such a compilation becomes doubtful when it is published as anonymous! In fact, this publication was largely based on several unpublished reports of GEER Foundation (Gandhinagar) on the spider fauna of protected areas of Gujarat by late Dr. B.H. Patel. One wonders why those original reports by Dr. Patel were not referred by the authors as citations of those reports are already available in Parasharya & Vyas (2013). In their compiled list, Anon. (2009) had not shown the source reference from where the species is added. In that case, such publication can't be considered as reliable.

There are certain mistakes in quoting published information. For Sr. no. 339, *Plesiophrictus millardi* Pocock, 1899, credit was given to Parasharya et al. (2011) when Parasharya et al. (2011) had identified it up to the genus level only. Moreover, when Parasharya et al. (2011) was referred by the authors, record of *Ichnocolus decoratus* of Theraphosidae family at Sadad

Devi forest (in the same publication) was not taken note of. At least three specimens were collected for identification. This and similar issues may be there with several other publications referred by the authors which need to be taken care.

Looking to so many problems in this published paper; it appears that the present checklist needs drastic improvement for its acceptance. We wish that keeping the above points in view, if the checklist is revised, it will serve as a standard and acceptable checklist of the spiders of Gujarat for future researchers.

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