

NEW GECKO SPECIES RECORDED IN ATTAPPADY

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New gecko species *Hemidactylus easai* recorded in Attappady Hills in Western Ghats | Photo Credit: [Sandeep Das](#)

A team of researchers has identified a new gecko species from the hills of Attappady, in the Western Ghats, Kerala. The new large species of gecko belonging to the genus *Hemidactylus goldfuss* was found close to human habitation — in tribal settlements and rock formations in the region. The team was on an expedition surveying amphibian reptiles in the forest areas of Attappady.

The new species, named *Hemidactylus easai* after former director of the Kerala Forest and Research Institute (KFRI) and wildlife conservationist PS Easa, was found in the drier parts of the region.

The gecko measures 105 mm from snout to vent (10.5 cm) and is a light brown to grey in colour. The genus *Hemidactylus goldfuss* has 180 species of geckos distributed across the globe and India has 48. Kerala has over 30 species of gecko and with this new addition, there are nine under the *Hemidactylus* genus.

The team first spotted the *Hemidactylus easai* in June 2020. This was followed by months of study, which involved analysing the morphology, habitat, geography and molecular aspects. The team submitted a report of its findings to *Vertebrate Zoology*, a scientific journal published by the Museum of Zoology, Dresden, Germany, in October, 2021. The report was published in February 2022.

The team led by herpetologists Sandeep Das and Surya Narayanan included Jafer Palot, Deepak V, Saunak Pal and Siddharth S. The study was supported by National Geographic grant and the Zoological Society of London.

“Geckos don’t pose a threat to human habitation and they play an important role in controlling the insect population. Though their relevance to humans may seem negligible, it is still significant,” says Sandeep, who is also a research scholar at the KFRI. “The forests of Attappady hold huge potential for those interested in the scientific study of reptiles and amphibians,” he adds.

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