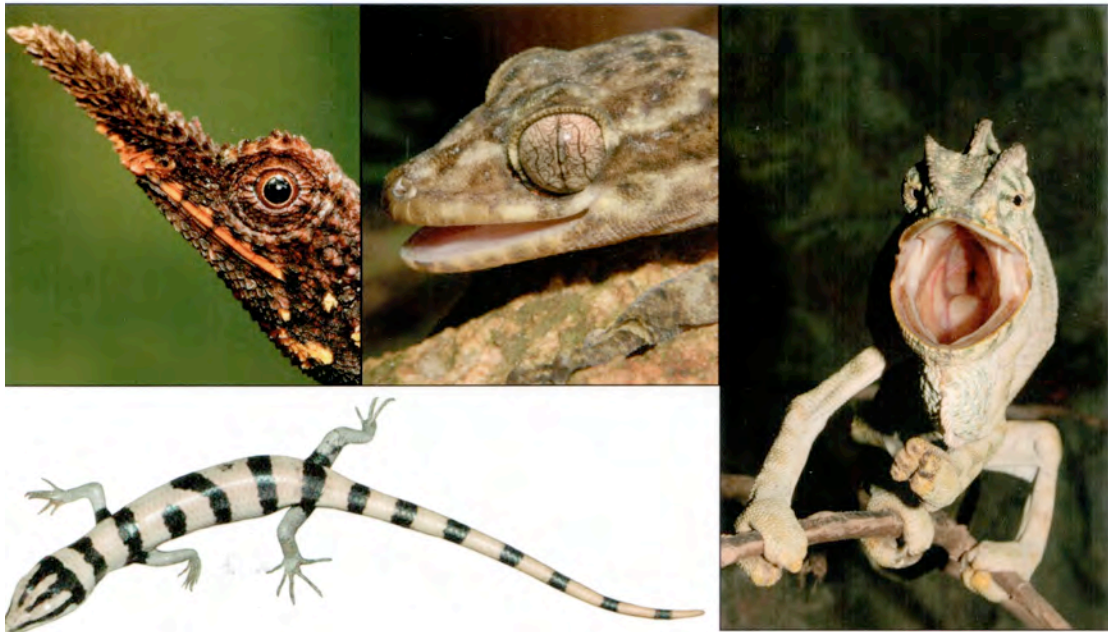


Ruchira Somaweera  
Nilusha Somaweera



# Lizards of Sri Lanka

A Colour Guide with Field Keys



Edition Chimaira



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## Foreword

Sri Lanka needs no introduction to biologists and herpetologists. Carolus LINNAEUS (1707–1778) described several zoological taxa based on material from the island (including *Calotes calotes* and *Lyriocephalus scutatus*), and additionally, described endemics of the island (e.g., *Oligodon calamarius* and *Cylindrophis maculatus*), while providing erroneous locality information. Its colonial history (under the Dutch and English) also resulted in western interest in its flora and fauna, and names still ring out- Edward Fredrick KELAART (1819–1860), James Emerson TENNENT (1894–1869) and Frank WALL (1868–1950). Closer to our time, one man stands out: Paulus Edward Pieris DERANIYAGALA (1900–1973), arguably the most famous of Sri Lanka's sons, and a formidable figure in the history of vertebrate discoveries.

Within the last two decades, interest in the herpetofauna of the island nation has intensified, led primarily by two independent groups (albeit frequently collaborating)- the *Amphibia and Reptile Research Organisation of Sri Lanka* (ARROS), headed by the indefatigable Anslem DE SILVA, and the *Wildlife Heritage Trust of Sri Lanka* (WHT), with its founder, Rohan PETHIYAGODA. Other important researchers of reptiles and amphibians are based at the universities in Colombo, Peradeniya and elsewhere, all contributing to the intensity of sampling being currently witnessed in Sri Lanka.

The volume you hold in your hand is the product of a husband and wife team from Sri Lanka, and can be described as a labour of love, being extra-academic achievement for Ruchira and Nilusha SOMAWEERA, now attached to the School of Biological Sciences, University of Sydney (where the former is registered for graduate work).

Keeping with the traditional approach to works such as this, the text commences with an introductory account of the geography, including physiography, climate and vegetation of the island, an introduction to the rich saurofauna, its biogeographic affinities, a short history of studies, lizards in indigenous cultures, conservation and protected areas and institutions relevant to the protection and study of lizards in Sri Lanka.

A modern checklist of species is included, as is an illustrated key (a first for the region), showing thumbnail images for the benefit of non-technical users of the guide. There after is the heart of the volume, comprising species accounts, that include multiple images of each taxa (museum specimens, in case of rare species), showing different ontogenetic stages, sexes and colour morphs. Following this is a short listing of species erroneously or dubiously recorded from Sri Lanka. At the end of the book are the glossary, gazetteer of localities, references and scientific names index.

The SOMAWEERAS have now set a high standard for field guides to an important component of the herpetofauna, and one hopes this example will be emulated regionally and globally.

Indraneil DAS, D.Phil.  
28 April 2009.