

Tail Bifurcation in a Yellow-bellied House Gecko, *Hemidactylus flaviviridis* Rüppel 1835, in Chitwan, Nepal

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Of the six species of house geckos (genus *Hemidactylus*) known to occur in Nepal, the Yellow-bellied House Gecko (*Hemidactylus flaviviridis*) is the largest and has the most extensive distribution (Schleich and Kästle 2002). Yellow-bellied House Geckos occur sympatrically with other house geckos, functioning largely as human commensals but also exploiting natural habitats such as trees and rocks (Schleich and Kästle 2002; Shah and Tiwari 2004; Bhattarai et al. 2017, 2018).

Many lizards, including most geckos, are known to shed their tails as an escape mechanism (e.g., Domínguez-López et al. 2015), although tail loss also has been attributed to intraspecific territorial aggression and mating events (e.g., Koleška and Jablonski 2015). When lost or damaged tails are regenerated, abnormalities such as multiple tails sometimes occur (e.g., Arnold 1988; Gogliath et al. 2012; Yankanchi

and Kumbar 2016). Herein we report an adult *Hemidactylus flaviviridis* with a bifurcated tail from Chitwan, to the best of our knowledge the first such case for any lizard in Nepal.

At 2035 h on 28 July 2019, we observed an adult Yellow-bellied House Gecko with a bifurcated tail (Fig. 1) at Ratnanagar-06, Bachhauli, Chitwan, Nepal (27°34'53"N, 84°30'16"E). The individual appeared healthy with no evident injuries or malformation other than the bifid tail. The autotomized portion was almost equal in length to the original. We released the gecko at the site of capture and monitored it for the next ten days, frequently observing it during the day (Fig. 1).

Multiple tails have been recorded for many species of lizards, including *H. flaviviridis* in Maharashtra, India (Kumbar et al. 2011). Although a bifurcated tail could possibly affect locomotion in some instances, some individuals with multiple tails can survive and reproduce despite the abnormality (e.g., Cunha Passos et al. 2014). We suggest that detailed studies could lead to a better understanding of performance by such malformed individuals.

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Fig. 1. An adult Yellow-bellied House Gecko (*Hemidactylus flaviviridis*) with a bifurcated tail. Photographs by Dip Prasad Chaudhary/NTNC-BCC (top) and Santosh Bhattarai (bottom).

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