

RECORD OF *NASIKABATRACHUS* FROM THE NORTHERN WESTERN GHATS

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The recently described Purple Frog / Pig-nosed Frog *Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis* Biju & Bossuyt (Family Sooglossidae: see Frost *et al.*, 2006) was recorded from type locality Kattappana (Biju & Bossuyt, 2003). It has been reported from Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary (Pollachi), Anamalais (Dutta *et al.*, 2004), Kothamangalam, Moolamattom, Peerumedu, Melukav & Erumely (Andrews *et al.*, 2005) and Karuvarakkundu (Jafer Palot, *pers. comm.*) south of the Palghat gap. Distribution of this species is inadequately known due to lack of exhaustive surveys and possibly because of its cryptic nature (IUCN *et al.*, 2006).

The present communication reports the occurrence of *Nasikabatrachus* sp. in Silent Valley National Park (SVNP) (11°04'-13'N & 76°24'-29'E), in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and is predominately covered with the tropical rain forests with an annual rainfall of 3200 to 7500mm.

One specimen of *Nasikabatrachus* sp. was observed on 17 May 2003 in Nilikkal, bordering SVNP. The specimen was not collected due to lack of permission. However, identification of this specimen was done by comparing the external appearance and colouration of the specimen reported by Biju and Bossuyt (2003). The frog was found near a seasonal stream in the relatively drier moist deciduous forest largely dominated by the *Xylia xylocarpa*. The surroundings had sparse amount of leaf litter and canopy cover (>40%). All reported *Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis* so far have been sighted in and around cultivated lands and grasslands (Andrews *et al.*, 2005).

The present observation was at an altitude of 750m, and all previous sightings of *Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis* were at 0-500m (Andrews *et al.*, 2005), c. 900m (Biju & Bossuyt, 2003) and 850-1000m (IUCN *et al.*, 2006). The status of this endemic anuran is currently Endangered (B1ab(iii)) due to restricted range, few locations and decline in habitat quality (IUCN *et al.*, 2006). The IUCN Global Amphibian Assessment considers only the localities of Kattappana and Idukki town as the distribution record for *Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis*, while mentioning that all other localities reported for this species may be of undescribed *Nasikabatrachus* species. This report is to place on record the extension of range of the genus *Nasikabatrachus* to the northern Western Ghats.

This observation also substantiates the inadequate information on amphibian fauna of this region and suggests priority for further surveys to get an enhanced resolution of distribution data, which can influence conservation priorities.

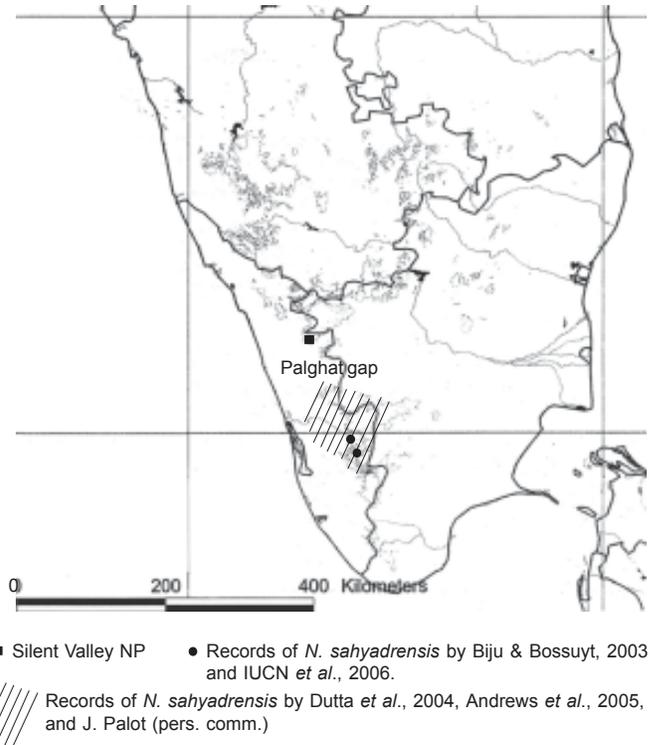


Figure 1. Sighting record of *Nasikabatrachus* sp. from northern Western Ghats

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[Editor: Since the author does not have any physical evidence for the occurrence of this taxon in Silent Valley National Park, the decision to publish this was made after extensive discussions with some of the staff of SACON, who vouch for the authenticity of the sighting and identification of the taxon by the author.]

