

A New Site Record of *Rana gracilis*: Gravenhorst, 1829 (Amphibia: Ranidae) from Godawaya, Hambanthota District

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Rana gracilis, ශ්‍රී ලංකාවට ආවේණික මැඩි විශේෂයකි. මොවුන් ලෝක සංරක්ෂණ සංගමයේ රතු දත්ත පොත අනුව තර්ජනයට ලක්වූ විශේෂයක් ලෙස ද සලකනු ලබයි. *Rana temporalis* හා *Rana aurantiaca* මොවුන්ගේ කිරිටුම බන්ධුන් වන අතර වැඩුණු පිරිමි සතෙකු ප්‍රමාණයෙන් මි. මි. 32.3 - 53.4 හා වැඩුණු ගැහැණු සතෙකු මි. මි. 53.5 - 67.6 අතර වේ. මෙම විශේෂය මි. 460 දක්වා උස් වූ තෙත් හා වියළි කලාප දෙකෙහි ම හමුවේ. මෙම වාර්තාවට අනුව *Rana gracilis* වලවේ ගං ද්‍රෝණිය පුරාම විසිරී ඇත.

Species Identification

The Sri Lanka Wood Frog, *Rana gracilis* (Dutta & Manamendra-Arachchi, 1996) is an endemic Ranid which has been categorized as Threatened (IUCN Sri Lanka, 2000) out of 53 amphibian species recorded in Sri Lanka (Kirthisinghe, 1957; Dutta & Manamendra-Arachchi, 1996; Manamendra-Arachchi & Pethiyagoda, 2001a; Manamendra-Arachchi & Pethiyagoda, 2001b.).

The length of mature males of *R. gracilis* is 32.3-53.7 mm and that of gravid females 53.5-67.6 mm (snout to vent). Head is longer than broad and snout bluntly pointed when viewed from laterally and dorsally, also equal to or less than twice the inter orbital width. Tympanum distinct, rounded, its horizontal diameter about two-thirds to three-fourths the width of orbit. Fingers free, first finger shorter than fourth; second shortest; third longest. Relative length of toes is 1<2<3<5<4 (Dutta & Manamendra-Arachchi, 1996).

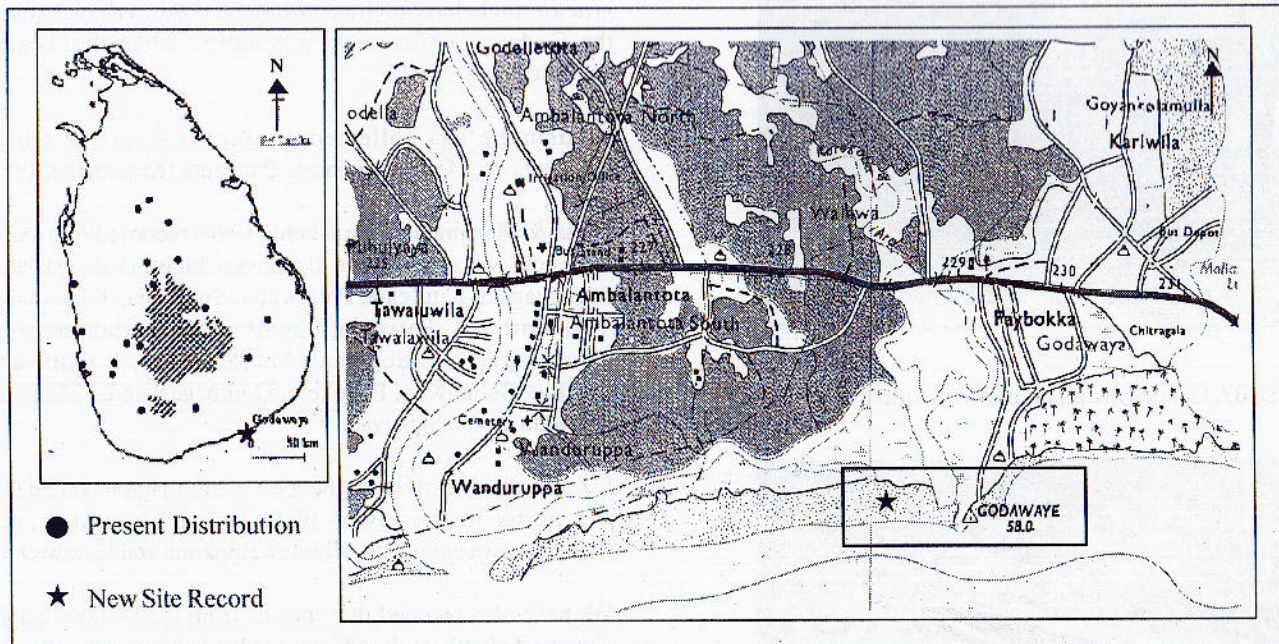


Figure 01. The present distribution and the recorded new site of the *R. gracilis*.

¹ IUCN, The World Conservation Union, Sri Lanka Country Office, 53, Horton Place, Colombo 07, Sri Lanka.

The color of *R. gracilis* in life is pinkish light brown dorsally. Some specimens have a diffused dark brown or black vertebral stripe extending from the interorbital region to just behind the pelvis. A yellowish golden stripe extends from the upper lip, below the eye and tympanum, along the side to the region of the groin. Between the dorsolateral glandular fold is a broad, black longitudinal stripe extending from the tip of the snout to the groin. Belly is pale white or yellow. Inner side of thigh speckled with black and yellow. Limbs are without crossbars but are with irregular black patches (Dutta & Manamendra-Arachchi, 1996). Absence of these crossbars differentiates *R. gracilis* from both *R. temporalis* and *R. aurantiaca*, its close resemblances (Manamaendra-Arachchi, 2000).

Present Distribution

R. gracilis is found in both wet and dry zones up to 460m in Sri Lanka (Fig. 01). This species is semi-arboreal (Dutta & Manamendra-Arachchi, 1996).

Information on New Site Locality

This observation was made on 14th November 2002 at 2030 hrs. An adult *R. gracilis* was found on the leaf litter of the *Casuarina* plantation (Fig. 02), in Godawaya (Northern latitude 06° 06' 27.2" and Eastern longitude 081° 02' 48.4"), which is



Figure 02. *Casuarina* plantation with the undergrowth.



Figure 03. Adult *Rana gracilis* recorded from Godawaya.

located in Ambalanthota of Hambanthota District (Fig.01). This site is situated in the arid zone and is approximately 500m and 100m away from the Walawa estuary and the sea, respectively.

Weather Condition

The day was a clear night with a breeze and average ambient temperature was 28.5°C. There had been occasional showers during previous weeks as it was mid intermonsoon.

Habitat and Vegetation of the New Location

The habitat, *Casuarina equisetifolia* plantation, was found with small patches of bushy plants such as *Eupatorium odoratum*, *Morinda coreia*, *Opuntia dillenii* and *Phoenix pusilla*, the last being the most abundant plant of the undergrowth (Fig. 02). The average girth at breast height (GBH) of *Casuarina* plants was 38.3cm. The Walawa estuary, coconut plantation, sand dune vegetation and the mangrove associated vegetation were main habitat types that surrounded the plantation.

The climatic condition of Godawaya is similar to wet zone areas due to the Walawa River and its estuary. Godawaya is situated on the banks of the Walawa River and it harbours habitats that are suitable for both wet and dry zone fauna. *R. gracilis* might have migrated from the Walawa River banks to the Godawaya *Casuarina* plantation when the weather condition was suitable.

Kirtisinghe has collected *R. gracilis* from the Ohiya, Diyathalawa, Mout-Lavinia and Panadura (Kirtisinghe, 1957).

Dutta & Manamendra-Arachchi (1996) recorded *R. gracilis*, from both wet and dry zone localities; Chilaw, Dodangaslanda, Inginiyagala, Kitulgala, Pallewatta, Sinharaja, Trincomalee, Yatiyanthota, Ritigala, Opatha, Kumaradola group (Monaragala), Hidogama (Anuradapura), Kalatuwawa, Attidiya-Bellanwila, Pallekele, Dombagaskanda, Mihintale, Udawalawa and Sigiriya.

L.J. Mendis Wickramasinghe (pers. comm.) has recorded from *R. gracilis* in the lower Walawa irrigation area, near Palugaswewa camp site, Hondawelpokuna and Katuwewa.

We have also recorded this species from the Walawa estuary near Ambalanthota, in a home garden habitat.

Therefore, based on observations made by previous researchers and our findings it appears that *R. gracilis* is distributed along the entire Walawa river basin.

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