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ATRAX ROBUSTUS (ARANEAE: HEXATHELIDAE) - A NEW DISTRIBUTIONAL RECORD TO ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA.

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ABSTRACT

Atrax robustus is reported first time from Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh. It is a Mygalomorph spider, having ancient characters. If proper care is not taken, it will become extinct. Diagnostic characters, live photos are provided for its easy identification.

Introduction

Spiders are the most interesting animals as well as obligate carnivorous creatures. Some of these having poisonous glands are called tarantulas (Febre, Jean- Henri, 1912). A total of 44,540 species, 3,924 genera belonging to 58 families are present in the world (Platnick N.I, 2014). Among these some are Mygalomorph Spiders, which are having ancient characters are threatened with extinction (Not evaluated, IUCN). Most diverse fauna of spiders indicate the health of the environment. The spiders are extremely diverse in India and harbors 1,400 species, of which five species of Mygalomorphs and 54 species of Araneomorphs are representing from Nallamala forest in Kurnool district (K.Thulsi Rao et al, 2005).

Atrax is one of the Australian genera of Hexathilidae (Simon, 1892) family in the sub order Mygalomorphae consist of three species distributed widely in Australia(Gray, Michael, 2010) It was described by Octavius pickard-Cambridge in 1877.

During the recent faunal studies in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh, authors could collect an interesting specimen of *Atrax robustus*. The collection site is a small river with fertile land in peripheral forest area of Nallamala range of hills. The stream flows along with Acasia plants and agriculture land near Gulladurthy village in Kurnool district. Only two individuals were seen in the collection site. The specimen were collected, preserved systematically following standard methodology. After a critical study, the specimen was identified as *Atrax robustus* belonging to the family Hexathilidae. A thorough perusal of literature has revealed that the species has not been recorded so for from Andhra Pradesh. The genus is representing three in Australia and only one species from Andhra Pradesh. Phylogenetic studies stated that *Atrax robustus* is restricted to Australia. Earlier to this study there is no report of *Atrax robustus* in Nallamala forest, Andhra Pradesh.

Atrax robustus was discovered and described by O.P. Cambridge from Australia. Hence the present report of *Atrax robustus* from new distributional record for the state of Andhra Pradesh and extends its distribution from Australia to India.

Fig. 1: Atrax robustus

A B

C

Figure 1: Atrax robustus

A. Dorsal view
B. Front view
C. Burrow

Diagnostic Characters: Body size of female spider measured 35 mm. Small body when compared to true tarantulas. Cephalothorax glossy and dark – plum coloured, longer than wide. It has poisonous glands lie entirely within their chelicerae. Chelicerae and fangs are large and powerful. The carapace is almost hairless, appears smooth and glossy. Abdomen has rough surface, longer than wide, anteriorly narrow and posteriorly curved, ending with four spinnerets. Limbs are shiny, sought and solidly built. A row of teeth along the fang groove and another row on their paired claws. This spider has a conical mating spur on the underside of each second leg. Spine-like mating organs are present at the tip of short, leg-like, male palps. These palps are short, leg-like appendages which lie alongside the massive, projecting jaws, under which the dagger-like fangs are folded. Eyes are closely grouped in front. If we provoked, it show aggressive behavior, rearing and displaying their impressive fangs.

Distribution

Endemic to Australia, and now observed in India.

Andhra Pradesh: Gulladurthy village, Kurnool district.

Habitat

Rarely found in soft red soils between Nallamala and Yerramala hills.

Note

Earlier it was not reported in India due to sufficient work was done in rural areas and lack of researchers in the villagers. This rear spider going to extinct, due to ancient characters as well as habitat loss.

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