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Cover: Oil painting of Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae*. © R. Mahesh.



From the heart of Urpad: records of *Cyrtodactylus bapme* Kamei & Mahony, 2021 (Reptilia: Squamata: Gekkonidae) from Assam, India, with comments on the pre-cloacal region in males

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The Asian gekkonid genus *Cyrtodactylus* is recognized as the third most speciose vertebrate genus worldwide, with *Cyrtodactylus khasiensis* (Jerdon, 1870) being the first species of the genus to be described from northeastern India. Owing to limited taxonomic investigations and morphological similarities among regional populations, the species was long presumed to have a wide distribution across the Indo-Burma region (Smith 1935; Li 2007). Subsequent studies (Li 2007; Mahony 2009; Agarwal et al. 2014) established a systematic framework based on samples from northeastern India and adjacent regions, highlighting the need for further taxonomic evaluation. As a result, the distribution of *C. khasiensis* is now restricted to the eastern Khasi Hills of Meghalaya, India (Agarwal et al. 2018a). Following this taxonomic reassessment, 31 new species of the genus have been described from various states of northeastern India within the last nine years (Agarwal et al. 2018a,b; Purkayastha et al. 2020, 2021, 2022; Mirza et al. 2022; Kamei & Mahony 2021; Bohra et

al. 2022, 2026; Lalremsanga et al. 2022, 2023; Mahony & Kamei 2022; Boruah et al. 2024; Basfore et al. 2026; Bharali et al. 2026).

Cyrtodactylus bapme Kamei & Mahony, 2021, a member of the *khasiensis* group, was described from the eastern Garo Hills of Meghalaya, India, based on a type series comprising four female individuals. In the absence of males, the authors relied on pitted precloacal scales in females to distinguish and compare the new species with congeners, under the assumption that the number of pit-bearing scales corresponds approximately to the number of precloacal pores in males, which was the only feasible approach at the time. Herein, additional data on *C. bapme* is provided, including details of femoral pores in males based on recently collected specimens, and present the first record of the species from the state of Assam, India.

Four males (ADBUSB31; ADBUSB32; ADBUSB33; ADBUSB34) and two female specimens (ADBUSB35; ADBUSB36) were collected from the hills surrounding

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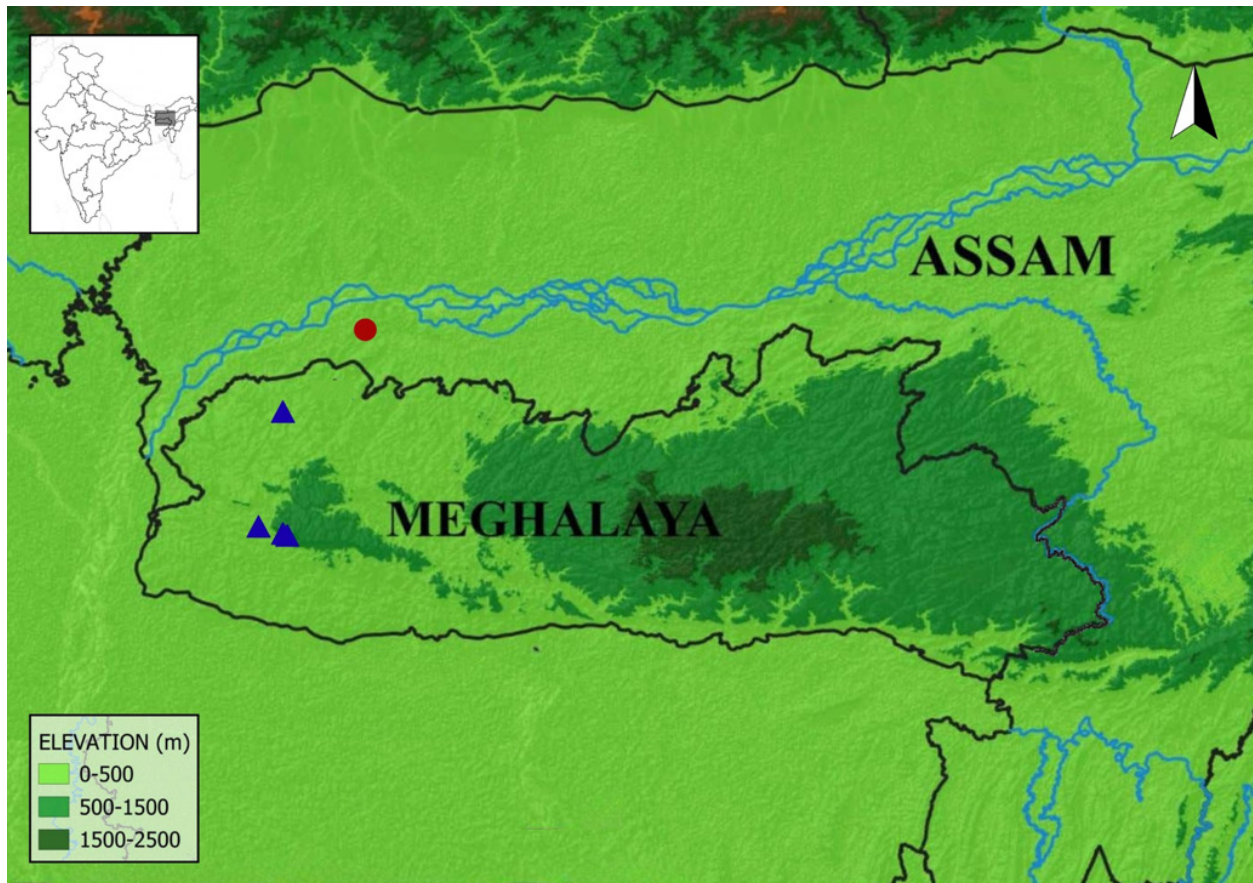


Image 1. Distribution records of *Cyrtodactylus bapme*: Blue triangles—locality records of the species from Meghalaya (Daribokgre Hamlet, East Garo hills) | Red dot—the new locality record of the species from Agia Village, Goalpara District, Assam.

Urpad Beel, Agia Village, Goalpara District, Assam, India (26.087° N, 90.569° E; Image 1), and have been deposited in the museum collection of Assam Don Bosco University (ADBU), Sonapur, Assam.

Morphological and molecular data were generated following Kamei & Mahony (2021). The specimens were compared morphologically with all known species of the *khasiensis* group using literature containing original descriptions and taxonomic revisions based on type specimens (e.g., Darevsky et al. 1998; Bauer 2003; Li 2007; Mahony 2009; Agarwal et al. 2018a,b; Purkayastha et al. 2020, 2021; Grismer et al. 2021; Mirza et al. 2021, 2022; Kamei & Mahony 2021; Bohra et al. 2022, 2026; Mahony & Kamei 2022; Lalremsanga et al. 2023; Boruah et al. 2024, Basfore et al. 2026; Bharali et al. 2026).

Molecular analysis revealed that the *Cyrtodactylus* specimens collected from Agia Village are conspecific with the type sequences of *C. bapme*, differing by an uncorrected p-distance of only 1.3–3.5% in the mitochondrial ND2 gene (Table 1). The Agia Village specimens of *C. bapme* were also recovered as the sister lineage to *C. karsticola* (type locality – South Garo Hills

District, Meghalaya, India), from which they differ by an uncorrected p-distance of 6.7% in the mitochondrial ND2 gene (Table 1).

Based on literature and the present collections, *C. bapme* can be defined as a moderate-sized species, ranging in snout–vent length from 60.2–77.0 mm, with 8–12 supralabials and 8–11 infralabials. Dorsal tubercles are usually feebly keeled, bluntly conical, four to five times larger than the dorsal granular scales, and arranged in 20–24 longitudinal rows at midbody. There are 30–37 paravertebral tubercles between the level of the axilla and the groin, 46–51 paravertebral tubercles from the occiput to the mid-sacrum, and 30–39 mid-ventral scale rows between the indistinct ventrolateral folds. Males possess a continuous series of 12–17 precloacal pores (PcP) accompanied by one to seven pitted scales, either in a continuous or discontinuous series on either side of the pore-bearing scales. Females usually exhibit 10–13 pit-bearing precloacal scales in a continuous series, except for a single specimen (BNHS/Bombay Natural History Society 2754) lacking pits (Kamei & Mahony 2021). Subdigital lamellae range 12–19 under finger IV



Image 2. *Cyrtodactylus bapme* in life from Agia Village, Goalpara District, Assam. A & B—ADBUSB31, an adult male | C—ADBUSB32, an adult male | D—ADBUSB33, an adult male | E—ADBUSB34, an adult male | F—Uncollected gravid female. © Sanath Chandra Bohra.

and 15–22 under toe IV (both counts excluding non-lamellar scales between the proximal and apical lamellae series). The dorsal pattern consists of 7–10 paired dark brown transverse blotches on either side of the mid-vertebral region, arranged somewhat parallel to each other, leaving a thin mid-dorsal stripe. The tail exhibits a continuous series of alternating dark and light transverse bands, with subcaudal scales arranged in small granular series and lacking transverse enlargement.

Cyrtodactylus bapme differs from all the members of the *khasiensis* group in the morphology of the preloacal

region, with males possessing 12–17 preloacal pores in a continuous series, versus 34–38 preloaco-femoral pores (PcFP) and no pits in *C. karsticola*; 7–8 PcP in *C. aaronbaueri*; 3–4 preloacal pores in *C. annapurnaensis*; 5–7 PcP in *C. bengkhuaiai*; 8 PcP in *C. brevidactylus*; 6–10 PcP in *C. cayuensis*; 7–8 PcP in *C. dianxiensis*; 26–39 PcFP in *C. guwahatiensis*; 7–8 PcP in *C. karanshahi*; 34–38 PcP in *C. karsticola*; 10–11 PcP in *C. kazirangaensis*; 6–7 PcP in *C. kiphire*; 3–5 PcP in *C. lungleiensis*; 5 PcP in *C. mandalayensis*; 7 PcP in *C. manipurensis*; 7–8 PcP in *C. martinolii*; 10–11 PcP in *C. mombergi*; 8–10 PcP

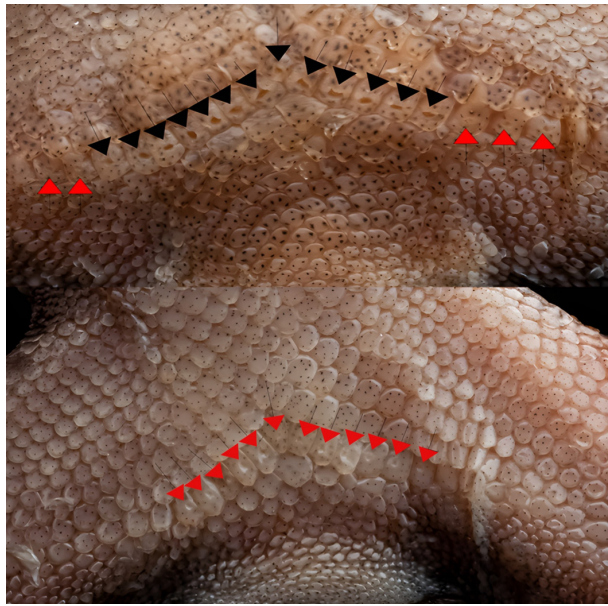


Image 3. Top—Arrangement of precloacal pores in a male (ADBUSB31) of *Cyrtodactylus bapme* (the black arrows indicate pre-cloacal pores whereas the red arrows indicate pitted scales) | Bottom—Arrangement of pre-cloacal pits in females of *C. bapme* (indicated by red arrows). © Sanath Chandra Bohra

in *C. montanus*; 7–9 PcP in *C. namdaphaensis*; 27 PcP in *C. ngengpuiensis*; 6 PcP in *C. ngopensis*; 7 PcP in *C. siahaensis*; 8–10 PcP in *C. siangensis*; 40 PcFP in *C. tamaiensis*; 29–37 PcFP in *C. tripuraensis*; 9–11 PcP in *C. vairengtensis*; 10 PcP in *C. vanarakshaka*; 18–28 in *C. jayadityai*.

Regional congeners within the *khasiensis* group exhibiting PcP or PcFP counts that overlap with the range observed in males of *C. bapme* include *C. agarwali* (11–18); *C. aunglini* (12–13); *C. ayeyarwadyensis* (10–28); *C. chrysopylos* (8–13); *C. exercitus* (11–15); *C. gansi* (16–29); *C. jaintiaensis* (11–12); *C. khasiensis* (10–12); *C. namtiram* (12); *C. septentrionalis* (14); *C. urbanus* (9–12), *C. raimonaensis* (13).

Kamei & Mahony (2021), citing comparative literature, remarked that the number of pitted scales in females, when present, is either the same as or less (but never higher) than the number of precloacal pores in males of related species for which both sexes are known. Accordingly, they interpreted the 0–13 pitted scales observed in the all-female type series of *C. bapme* as indicative of the minimum number of precloacal pores that would be expected in males of that species. Although this inference is reasonable given the available material, the results demonstrate that such metrics are insufficient for species delimitation when only females are available. The males of *C. bapme* examined

Table 1. Uncorrected pairwise (ND2) genetic divergence between the individuals of *Cyrtodactylus bapme*.

<i>C. bapme</i> (MW367437) *female					
<i>C. bapme</i> (MW367438) female	0.013				
<i>C. bapme</i> (MW367435) female	0.015	0.001			
<i>C. bapme</i> (ADBUSB31) * male	0.015	0.016	0.017		
<i>C. bapme</i> (ADBUSB32) * male	0.016	0.016	0.017	0.000	
<i>C. bapme</i> (MW367436) female	0.034	0.032	0.033	0.039	0.038

*—sequences generated from the holotype of Kamei & Mahony, (2021) | *—sequences generated in this study from Goalpara, Assam.

herein possess 12–17 precloacal pores, surpassing the 0–13 pitted scales reported in the type series and thereby illustrating that female-derived values may underestimate male pore ranges.

This species is presently known only from two states in northeastern India, namely Agia Village in Goalpara District, Assam (88–104 m), and multiple localities across a broad elevation range (90–1,015 m) in the East and West Garo Hills districts of Meghalaya (Image 1). In Meghalaya, it inhabits a variety of microhabitats, including rocks and trees within secondary as well as dense evergreen to semi-evergreen broad-leaved forests, often in association with streams, and is also found in betel vine jhum cultivations. It can be sympatrically found alongside *C. karsticola* and *C. agarwali* in South Garo Hills, Meghalaya, India. In Goalpara District, Assam, the species occurs in a disturbed yet relatively well-vegetated hill range at Agia Village, where the forest type is predominantly moist deciduous to semi-evergreen, intermixed with rubber tree plantations established by the local Garo community. Here, individuals were recorded in association with small to medium-sized rocks, loose soil patches, forest tracks, and minor hill streams. Gravid females and hatchlings were encountered between March and September. On 16 March 2024 at approximately 2045 h, a gravid female (uncollected) was observed preying upon a juvenile huntsman spider (*Heteropoda* cf. *venatoria*). Being strictly nocturnal, the species was most frequently observed to be active approximately two to three hours after dusk.

It is also noteworthy that several species from northeastern India, including *C. barailensis*, *C. myaleiktaung*, and *C. nagalandensis*, remain known only from female specimens, with male data still unavailable. In this context, the present documentation of males in

C. bapme provides important taxonomic insight, not only by confirming earlier suppositions regarding pore counts but also by addressing a knowledge gap that has similarly limited comparative diagnoses in several other recently described taxa from the region.

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