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On the Lizards of Karachi Coast

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Abstract

Surveys along the coastal stretch, from Sandspit to Cape Monze, were undertaken during March 2003 to March 2006, to study the species of lizards. A total of 11 species of lizards belonging to 6 genera were reported from the area.

Keywords: Karachi Coast, *Hemidactylus, Acanthodactylus, Mesalina, Agamura, Crossobamon, Varanus.*

Introduction

Karachi coast provides different habitats known for diverse faunal assemblages. Hawks Bay, Buleji, Paradise Point and Cape Monze are among the important sites along the coast of Karachi which are considered to have diverse terrestrial fauna including lizards.

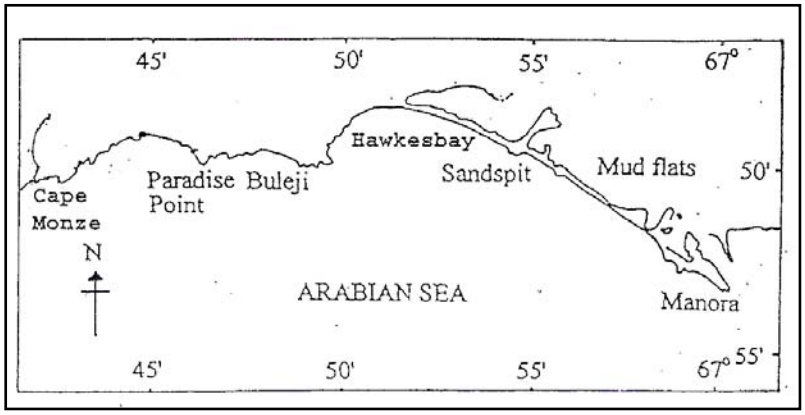

Fig. 1. Coast of Karachi showing surveyed area.

Lizards of Pakistan are known through the works of Auffenberg *et al* (1989, 1990), Boulenger (1890), Ghalib *et al* (1981), Iffat and Auffenberg (1988), Khan (1972, 2003), Khan and Mirza (1977), Khan and Nazia (2003), Khan *et al* (2005), Mertens (1969), Minton (1966), Rahman *et al* (2002) and Rahman and Papenfuss (2005). However, none of these studies covered coastal areas of Karachi except Khan *et al* (2005), who reported 4 species from the area. The present paper deals with the lizards of the coastal areas of Karachi, however, it does not cover mangroves and associate habitats.

Materials and Methods

The study was carried out along sandy/rocky belt of the Karachi coast, starting from Sandspit to Hawks Bay to Cape Monze (Fig. 1). The area consists of two prominent habitats for lizards i.e. buildings/huts/boulders along sea front, and sandy stretch and sandy/muddy/rocky areas above high water mark with patches of shrubs and other vegetations.

A number of field tours were conducted between March 2003 to March 2006, to observe the lizard species in the two habitats. Forceps and magnifying glass were used to study the morphological features. Identification of lizard was made using Minton (1966).

Results and Discussion

No lizards were observed from sandy/rocky area of sea front including inter-tidal zone. No marine lizard is known from the other regional countries as well. Buildings and other man made structures and natural boulders above the high water mark provide suitable abode for a number of *Hemidactylus* species. Following lizard species belonging to this genus are predominantly inhabiting buildings, wooden fixtures and boulders.

Hemidactylus brooki Gray	Spotted Indian gecko
Hemidactylus flaviviridis Ruppell	Yellow bellied house gecko
Hemidactylus persicus Anderson	*Persian gecko*
Hemidactylus turcicus (Linnaeus)	Mediterranean gecko
Hemidactylus triedrus (Daudin)	Blotched gecko

In the sandy/muddy/rocky areas above high water mark common plant species are *Acacia senegal*, *Euphorbia caducifolia*, *Prosopis spicigera*, *Ziziphus nummularia*, *Salvadora persica*, *Grewia tenax* and *Blepharis syndic* (Beg, 1966). Along the backwaters of Sandspit, there are mudflats with sparse mangroves. This area was observed to be inhabited by following lizards.

Acanthodactylus cantoris Gunther	Indian fringe toed lizard
Calotes versicolor (Daudin)	Indian garden lizard
Mesalina watsonana Stoliczka	Long tailed desert lacerta
Agamura persica (Dumeril)	Blunt tailed spider gecko
Crossobamon orientalis (Blanford)	Sindh sand gecko
Varanus bengalensis (Daudin)	Indian monitor

A total of 11 species of lizards inhabit the coastal areas along Karachi coast. There is a need to conduct similar studies in the other areas along the coast of Pakistan, which will be helpful in understanding the biodiversity and interaction of various species inhabiting the coastal regions of Pakistan.

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