

SRI LANKA'S EASTERN SINHARAJA

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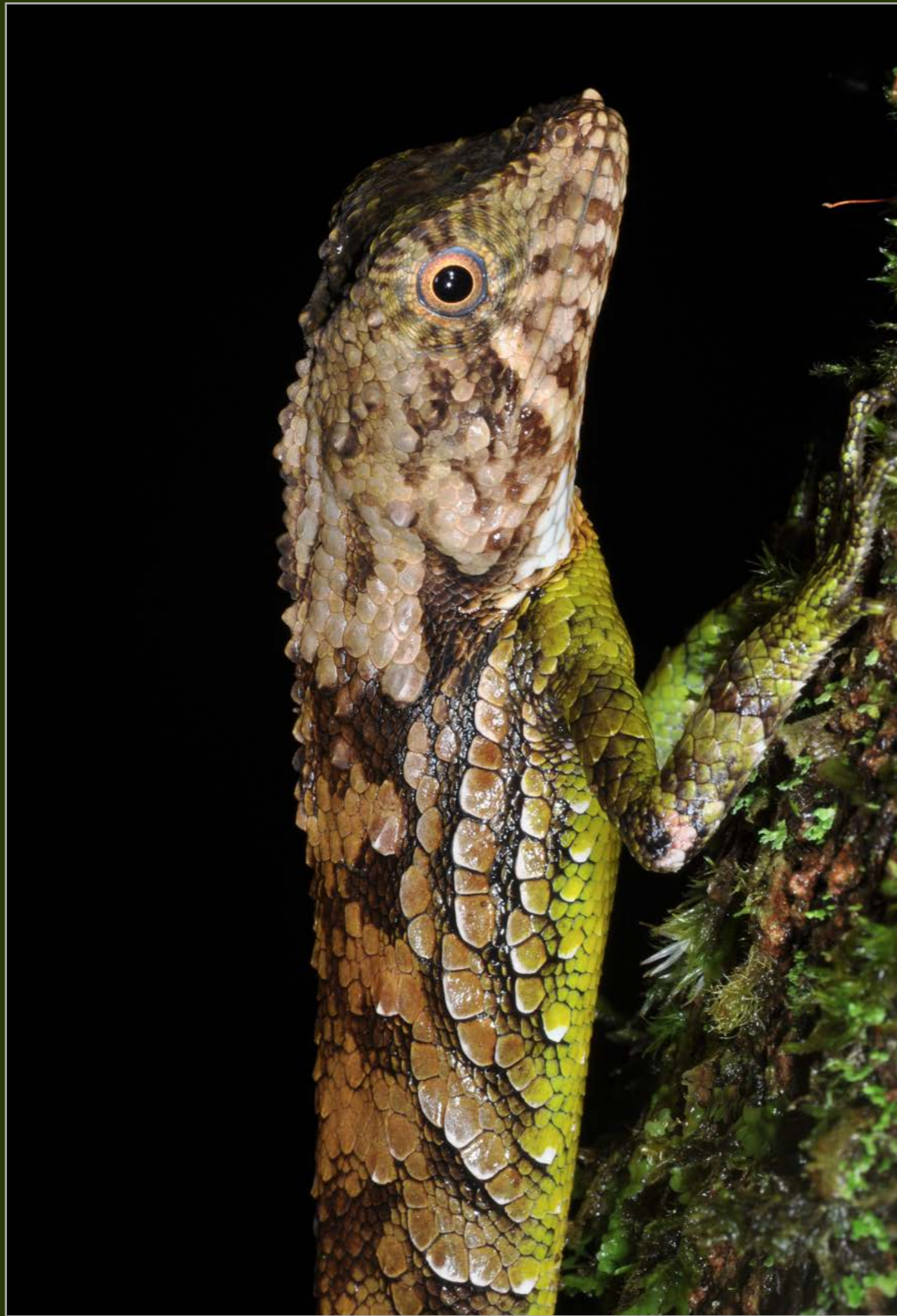


MYSTERIOUS MORNINGSIDE

Field researcher and passionate herpetologist Peter Janzen reports from a little-visited and critically threatened moist forest rich in endemics



A dazzling specimen of *Pseudophilautus poppiae*. On the opening spread, the endemic Sri Lankan Pit viper *Trimeresurus trigonocephalus*.



A portrait of the rarely observed *Ceratophora erdeleni*.

TEXT AND PHOTOS
BY PETER JANZEN

The moist rainforests of Morningside are situated in the eastern part of the Sinharaja Forest Reserve, in Sri Lanka. Only some 10 km² forests are left. The other parts are converted into agriculture land, especially for tea. Morningside lies at a higher altitude than the western part of Sinharaja. The Eastern Sinharaja is geographically positioned between 6°22' to 6°26'N and 80°31' to 80°31' E and the altitude ranges from 900 to 1170 m asl. The temperature is slightly lower than the western Sinharaja and the humidity is mostly high. The name Morningside was created during colonisation, because misty and drizzling weather are quite normal. The floristic region is moist mountain cloud forest with a canopy being lower than that of the lowland parts of Sinharaja.

During the last 25 years several new species were discovered here, species only to be found in the Morningside area: seven species of anuran amphibians, three agamids, one species of gecko. All these species are point endemics and they are critically endangered. And they are confronted with different threats due to human disturbances: deforestation, habitat destruction, tea cultivation, land degradation, illegal gem mining, illicit timber felling, collecting medicinal plants and firewood, setting fire to the forest, excessive usage of pesticides in plantations. The abundances of the above mentioned endemic reptile and amphibian species is often significantly low. Therefore the population size of these species is low, too.



The forested landscape of Morningside, in Sri Lanka's Sinharaja Forest Reserve.



Belonging to the *Saturnidae* family, the Sri Lankan tussar silk moth *Antheraea cingalesa* is quite large - reaching a wingspan of 12 to 16 cm - and stunningly colorful.



Calotes desilvai is another little-studied and rarely observed species.



Juvenile Hump Snout Lizard or Lyre Head Lizard *Lyriocephalus scutatus*.



Pseudophilautus folicola calling at night.



A pair of *Polypedates cruciger* in amplexus.



Rakwana Whipping Frog Taruga fastigo, a species in the family Rhacophoridae. It is endemic to Sri Lanka and only known from its type locality, Morningside.



Uperodon obscurus.



Pseudophilautus cavirostris, male with a leech feeding off its back.



Lankanectes corrugatus.



Pseudophilautus folicola.



A mating pair of *Pseudophilautus procax* in amplexus.



The perennially moist forest floor of Morningside is rich with orchid species. Left, *Cymbidium ensifolium*; right, *Anoechochilus setaceus*.



Hypnale nepa, the Sri Lankan Hump-nosed viper, is a venomous pitviper species endemic to Sri Lanka where it is known as *mukalan thelissa* in Sinhala.



The Sinharaja Bent-toed Gecko *Cyrtodactylus subsolanus* is a species of gecko endemic to island of Sri Lanka.



Sri Lankan Pit viper *Trimeresurus trigonocephalus*.



Adult male Hump Snout Lizard or Lyre Head Lizard *Lyriocephalus scutatus*.



Euphlyctis cyanophlytis.



Fejervarya kirtisinghei.



Pseudophilautus decoris.



Microhyla karunaratnei.