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New Distributional Records with an Annotated List of Scolopendrid Centipedes (Myriapoda: Chilopoda) from West Bengal, India

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ABSTRACT: The diversity and distribution of scolopendrid centipedes in eastern India, particularly in West Bengal, remain poorly documented despite their ecological importance. Previous studies recorded only thirteen species from the state, indicating a significant knowledge gap. The present study provides a comprehensive and up-to-date account of the family Scolopendridae in West Bengal, based on surveys conducted between 2021 and 2024 across diverse habitats, supplemented by a literature review and examination of specimens. The study also clarifies several earlier taxonomic and distributional ambiguities through the reassessment of doubtful records and updated nomenclatural interpretations. A total of eighteen species are documented, increasing the known diversity from thirteen to eighteen species. Five species are recorded for the first time from the state, namely *Ethmostigmus tristis* (Meinert, 1886), *Rhysida crassispina* Kraepelin, 1903, *Rhysida konda* Joshi, Karanth & Edgecombe, 2020, *Rhysida trispinosa* (Jangi & Dass, 1984), and *Scolopendra subspinipes* Leach, 1815, representing notable range extensions in eastern India. The study provides taxonomic notes, diagnoses, materials examined, and an updated distributional list for all species. These results establish a comprehensive baseline for future taxonomic, ecological, and biogeographical research on scolopendrid centipedes in the region.

Keywords: Centipede, Species, *Rhysida*, *Ethmostigmus, Scolopendra,* Scolopendridae, Eastern India.

1. INTRODUCTION

The centipede fauna of India is notably rich and diverse, with 126 species currently documented across the country. Despite the heterogeneous topography and ecological habitats of West Bengal, only 16 species have been reported so far (Kashmeera & Sureshan, 2025). Of these, family Scolopendridae in West Bengal is represented by thirteen species, *viz. Cormocephalus dentipes* Pocock, 1891, *Cormocephalus pygmaeus* Pocock, 1892, *Ethmostigmus pygomegas* (Kohlrausch, 1881), *Otostigmus nudus* Pocock, 1890, *Otostigmus politus* Karsch, 1881, *Otostigmus rugulosus* Porat, 1876, *Otostigmus spinosus* Porat, 1876, *Otostigmus scaber* Porat, 1876 (recorded from the state as *Otostigmus insularis* Hasse, 1887, which is currently considered a synonym of *Otostigmus scaber*), *Rhysida*

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longipes (Newport, 1845), *Rhysida pazhuthara* Joshi, Karanth & Edgecombe, 2020, *Scolopendra dehaani* Brandt, 1840, *Scolopendra hardwickei* Newport, 1844 and *Scolopendra morsitans* Linnaeus, 1758 (Khanna & Tripathi, 1985; Yadav 1993; Khanna, 1994a, 1997, 2006, 2013, 2020; Balan & Sureshan 2018 and Mukherjee et al., 2026). In light of recent field collections and a critical reassessment of earlier records, the present study aims to update the list of Scolopendridae species known from West Bengal. The present study documents five species of scolopendrid centipedes, thereby increasing the known diversity of Scolopendridae to eighteen species. In addition, the study compiles existing distributional data from the literature, thereby contributing to a broader understanding of scolopendrid centipede distribution patterns across the state and highlighting knowledge gaps in regional biodiversity assessments.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Collection and Preservation of Scolopendrid Species

Field surveys were conducted across various districts of West Bengal, India, covering a wide range of habitat types, including forested areas, grasslands, agricultural fields, and urban environments (Figure 1). Sampling was undertaken in diverse microhabitats such as beneath logs and stones, within leaf litter, under decomposing wood, and among accumulated organic debris to ensure coverage across diverse ecological conditions. Specimens were collected using a combination of methods, including active hand searching under stones, logs, and leaf litter with long forceps, as well as litter sampling, ground collection, and vegetation-based sampling (Balan & Sureshan, 2018). Subsequently, the specimens were preserved in 70% ethanol in separate vials. Relevant field data, including locality, habitat type, date of collection, and collector details, were recorded for each specimen during sampling.

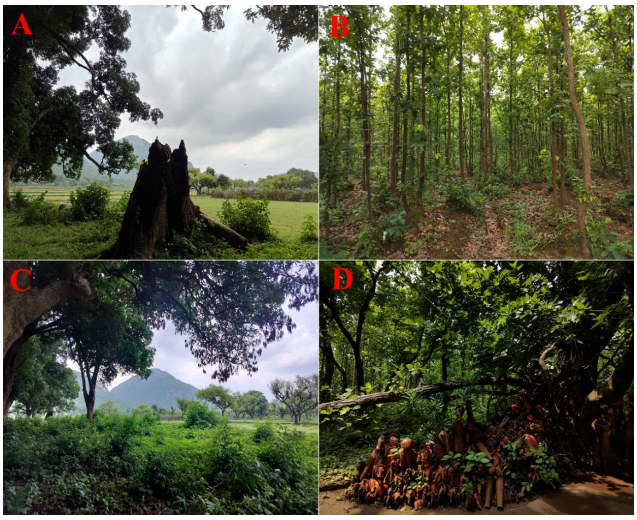

Figure 1. Habitat types of the Scolopendridae collection sites across districts of West Bengal: **A.** Purulia, **B.** Paschim Bardhaman, **C.** Jhargram, **D.** Paschim Medinipur

2.2. Identification of Scolopendrid Species

The collected samples were examined for diagnostic morphological characters using a Leica EZ4 educational stereo zoom microscope. High-resolution photographic documentation was carried out using a Leica M205A stereo zoom microscope equipped with a Leica DMC-4500 digital camera. Identification was carried out based on published literature: Jangi & Dass 1984; Lewis, 2010a, 2010b, 2015; Joshi & Edgecombe, 2013, 2018; Siriwut et al., 2016; Balan & Sureshan 2018; Joshi et al., 2020; Schileyko et al., 2020 and Chen et al., 2023.

All examined specimens are deposited in the National Zoological Collections of the Museum and Taxidermy Section (ZSIK-TC) of the Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata, India. Final image processing was completed using Adobe® Photoshop 7.0. The map was prepared using QGIS 3.40 Bratislava (QGIS Development Team, 2026). In addition, an annotated list of Scolopendridae species found in West Bengal is presented in Table 1. Collection details of examined specimens of the remaining species (which are not included here as new records) are provided in the Supplementary material.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Taxonomy

Class - Chilopoda

Order - Scolopendromorpha

Family- Scolopendridae Leach, 1814

Genus - *Ethmostigmus* Pocock, 1898

Type species- *Scolopendra trigonopodus* Leach, 1817

1. *Ethmostigmus tristis* (Meinert, 1886) (Figure 2)

Diagnosis: Antennae consisting of 20 articles, glabrous on the basal four (Figure 2A). The cephalic plate is smooth, with a longitudinal median furrow present on the anterior part of the plate. Tooth plate bearing three teeth (Figure 2B). Tergite with complete paramedian suture from tergite 4 (Figure 2C). Coxopleural process with a dorsal spine, the process is approximately twice as long as the sternite of the ultimate leg-bearing segment (Figure 2D). Ultimate leg

prefemur with one dorsomedial spine on the prefemur.

Material Examined: 1 ex. (ZSIK-TC119), Kangsabati water supply canal, Paschim Medinipur district, 22°24'23" N, 87°18'13" E, 12.viii.2024, Coll. Uttam Kumar Chaudhary.

Distribution in India: Tamil Nadu (Joshi & Edgecombe, 2018), West Bengal (new record).

Remarks: This is the first report of *Ethmostigmus tristis* from West Bengal (Figure 5A). The only characteristic difference found in the examined specimen (ZSIK-TC119) is the presence of two tarsal spurs in the first six pairs of legs (*vs* in the first three or four pairs of legs, as stated in Joshi and Edgecombe (2018).

Genus - *Rhysida* Wood, 1862

Type species- *Branchiostoma lithobioides* Newport, 1845

2. *Rhysida crassispina* Kraepelin, 1903 (Figure 3A, B)

Diagnosis: Antennae consisting of 18 articles, glabrous on the first five. The cephalic plate is smooth and narrow, with a longitudinal median furrow present on the anterior part of the plate. Tooth plate bearing four teeth. Sternite with complete paramedian suture (Figure 3A). Coxopleural process approximately twice as long as the sternite of the ultimate leg-bearing segment (Figure 3B). Leg 1 with a tibial and femoral spur.

Material Examined: 1 ex. (ZSIK-TC044), Joytunga, Paschim Medinipur district, 23°15'53" N, 87°15'47" E, 27. ix.2023, Coll. Kaushik Deuti and Party; 1 ex. (ZSIK-TC045), Susunia, Bankura district, 23°23'42" N, 86°59'14" E, 27. ix. 2023, Coll. Kaushik Deuti and Party.

Distribution in India: Kerala, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh (Khanna, 1994a, 2010; Joshi et al. 2020 and Kashmeera et al. 2025), West Bengal (new record).

Table 1. Annotated list of scolopendrid centipede species from West Bengal

Species	Distribution in West Bengal	Source
**Cormocephalus dentipes* Pocock, 1891	Kolkata, Nadia, Paschim Medinipur, Purulia	Khanna & Tripathi, 1985
Cormocephalus pygmaeus Pocock, 1892	Darjeeling	Khanna, 1994a, 2006
Ethmostigmus pygomegas (Kohlrausch, 1881)	Reported in earlier literature without a precise locality.	Khanna, 1994a
***Ethmostigmus tristis* (Meinert, 1886)	Paschim Medinipur	
**Otostigmus nudus* Pocock, 1890	Jharghram, Nadia, Paschim Medinipur	Mukherjee et al. 2026
Otostigmus politus Karsch, 1881	Darjeeling	Khanna, 1994a, 1997, 2020
**Otostigmus rugulosus* Porat, 1876	Alipurduar, Bankura, Birbhum, Jhargram, Nadia, Paschim Bardhaman, Paschim Medinipur, Purulia, South 24 Parganas	Mukherjee et al. 2026
**Otostigmus scaber* Porat, 1876	Alipurduar	Khanna, 1994a, 2008
Otostigmus spinosus Porat, 1876	Reported in earlier literature without a precise locality.	Khanna, 1994a
***Rhysida crassispina* Kraepelin, 1903	Bankura, Paschim Medinipur	
***Rhysida konda* Joshi, Karanth & Edgecombe, 2020	Jhargram, Paschim Bardhaman, Paschim Medinipur	
**Rhysida longipes* (Newport, 1845)	Bankura, Birbhum, Jhargram, Kolkata, Paschim Bardhaman, Purba Bardhaman, Purulia.	Khanna & Tripathi, 1985; Khanna, 1994a.
**Rhysida Pazhuthara* Joshi, Karanth & Edgecombe, 2020	Jhargram, Kolkata, Nadia, Paschim Bardhaman, Paschim Medinipur	Mukherjee et al. 2026
***Rhysida trispinosa* (Jangi & Dass, 1984)	Paschim Medinipur, Purulia	
**Scolopendra dehaani* Brandt, 1840	Darjeeling, Hooghly, Howrah, Kolkata, North 24 Parganas, Purba Bardhaman	Khanna, 1994a
**Scolopendra hardwickei* Newport, 1844	Mentioned without a precise locality.	Yadav, 1993; Khanna, 2013; Balan & Sureshan, 2018
Scolopendra morsitans Linnaeus, 1758	Bankura, Purba Bardhaman	Balan & Sureshan, 2018
***Scolopendra subspinipes* Leach, 1815	Purba Bardhaman	

* Previously reported species with new locality data added in the present study

**Species recorded for the first time from West Bengal in this study

Remarks: This is the first report of *Rhysida crassispina* from West Bengal (Figure 5B). The examined specimen (ZSIK-TC045) exhibits minor variations compared to the previously redescribed material. These include: Coxopleural process with two apical spines and one lateral spine (*vs* two apical spines only), no tarsal spur in leg 2-20 (*vs* one tarsal spur in leg 2-20) (Joshi et al., 2020).

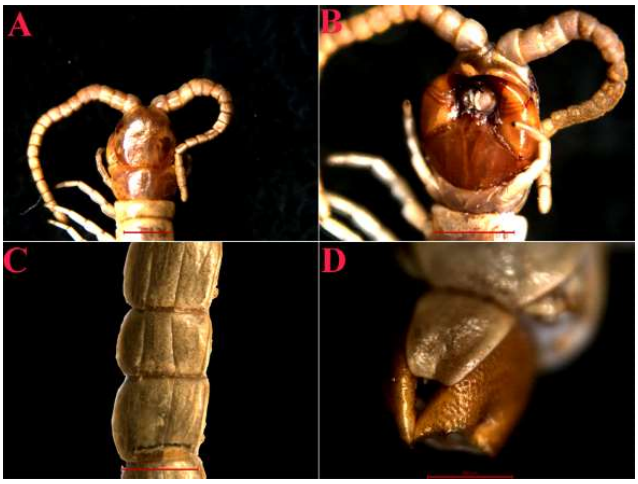

Figure 2. Diagnostic characters of *Ethmostigmus tristis* (Meinert, 1886): **A.** Cephalic plate with antenna, **B.** Tooth plate, **C.** Tergite with paramedian sutures, **D.** Sternite 21 with coxopleural process. Scale bars: A-C: 1mm; D: 0.5 mm

3. *Rhysida konda* Joshi, Karanth & Edgecombe, 2020 (Figure 3C, F)

Diagnosis: Antennae consisting of 18 articles. The cephalic plate is smooth, with a longitudinal median furrow present on the anterior part of the plate. Tooth plate bearing four teeth into two groups (Figure 3C). Sternite with paramedian suture 5-10% of length. Coxopleural process with two apical, one subapical and one lateral spine. Ultimate leg prefemur with 3 ventrolateral, 2 ventromedial and 3 dorsomedial spines (Figure 3F). Leg 1-4 with tibial spur. Leg 1-7 two tarsal spurs. One tarsal spur in leg 8-20.

Material Examined: 1 ex. (ZSIK-TC125), Kuradi, 14 No. coliary, Paschim Bardhaman district, 23°22'51" N, 87°01'27" E, 3. viii.2024, Coll. Uttam Kumar Chaudhary; 1 ex. (ZSIK-TC162), Saldanga, Paschim Medinipur district, 23°39'14" N, 87°35'33" E, 11.viii.2024, Coll. Uttam Kumar Chaudhary; 1 ex. (ZSIK-TC165), Beachi village, towards Khandarni dam, Jhargram district, 22°40'17" N, 86°42'39" E, 9.viii.2024, Coll. Uttam Kumar Chaudhary; 2 exs. (ZSIK-TC171 and ZSIK-TC172), Astajuri, Jhargram district,

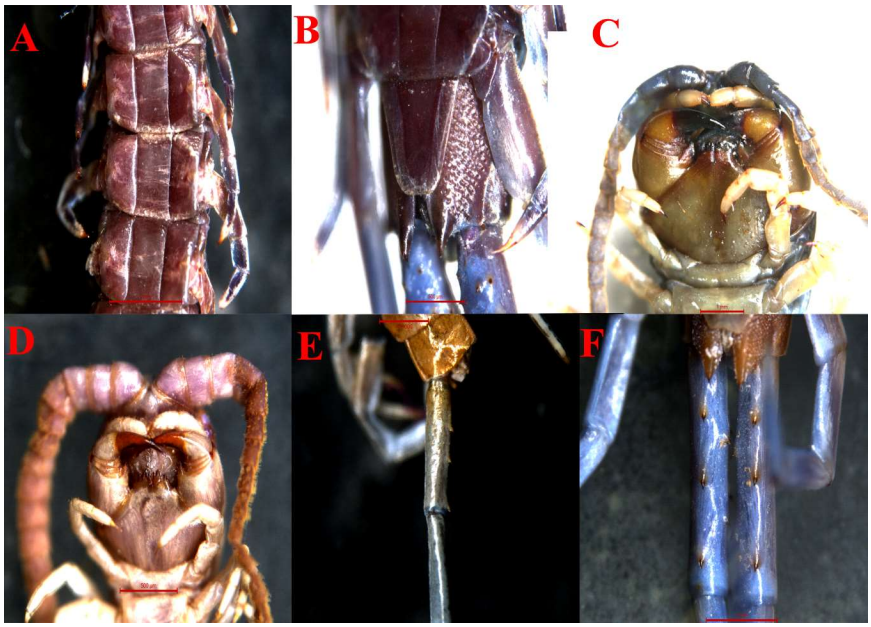

Figure 3. Diagnostic characters of *Rhysida crassispina* Kraepelin, 1903: **A.** Sternite, **B.** Coxopleural process ventrolateral view; diagnostic characters of *Rhysida konda* Joshi, Karanth & Edgecombe, 2020: **C.** Tooth plate, **F.** Ultimate leg prefemur and diagnostic characters of *Rhysida trispinosa* (Jangi & Dass, 1984): **D.** Tooth plate, **E.** Ultimate leg prefemur. Scale bars: A, C & F: 1 mm; B, D & E: 0.5 mm

22°38'59" N, 86°45'15" E, 7.viii.2024, Coll. Uttam Kumar Chaudhary.

Distribution in India: Chhattisgarh, Odisha (Joshi et al. 2020; Mukherjee et al. 2025), West Bengal (new record).

Remarks: This is the first report of *Rhysida konda* from West Bengal (Figure 5B). One of the examined specimens (ZSIK-TC125) shows minor variation compared to the previously redescribed material, such as the dorsomedial spine in the ultimate leg prefemur being absent (*vs* three dorsomedial spines present, as mentioned in Joshi et al., 2020).

4. *Rhysida trispinosa* (Jangi & Dass, 1984) (Figure 3 D, E)

Diagnosis: Antennae consisting of 20-21 articles. The cephalic plate is smooth, with a longitudinal median furrow present on the anterior part of the plate. Tooth plate bearing four teeth (Figure 3D). Sternite with paramedian suture 5-10% of length. Coxopleural process approximately 1.5 times of the sternite of the ultimate leg-bearing segment. Coxopleuron with two apical and one subapical spine. Ultimate leg prefemur with 2 ventrolateral, 1 median and 1 dorsomedian spine (Figure 3E). Leg 1-18 with two tarsal spurs, 19 and 20 with one spur.

Material Examined: 1 ex. (ZSIK-TC136), Murguma Dam, near Jhalda, Purulia district, 23°18'51" N, 86°02'59" E, 6. viii.2024, Coll. Uttam Kumar Chaudhary; 1 ex. (ZSIK-TC161), Saldanga, Paschim Medinipur district, 23°39'14" N, 87°35'33" E, 11.viii.2024, Coll. Uttam Kumar Chaudhary.

Distribution in India: Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu (Jangi & Dass, 1984; Balan & Sureshan, 2018; Joshi et al., 2020), West Bengal (new record).

Remarks: This is the first report of *Rhysida trispinosa* from West Bengal (Figure 5B).

Genus - *Scolopendra* Linnaeus, 1758

Type species- *Scolopendra morsitans* Linnaeus, 1758

5. *Scolopendra subspinipes* Leach, 1815 (Figure 4A-E)

Diagnosis: Antennae consisting of 18 articles, glabrous on the first six (Figure 4A), broken on one side. The cephalic plate is smooth, with a longitudinal median furrow present on the anterior part of the plate. Tooth plate bearing five teeth (Figure 4B). Tergite 3-20 paramedian suture and margination are complete from tergite 14-21 (Figure 4D). Sternite 3-20 with Complete paramedian suture (Figure 4C). Coxopleural process with two apical spines but lacking lateral and dorsal spines. Ultimate leg prefemur with 2 ventrolateral, 1 median and 3 dorsomedian spines (Figure 4E). Leg 1-20 with one tarsal spur.

Material Examined: 1 ex. (ZSIK-TC090), Bagilla village, Memari, Purba Bardhaman district, 23°09'08" N, 88°07'49" E, 15. ix. 1993, Coll. Chandra Bhan Prasad.

Distribution in India: Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Tamil Nadu (Khanna, 2001), West Bengal (new record).

Remarks: *Scolopendra subspinipes sensu stricto* has never been reported from West Bengal, as all earlier records refer to *Scolopendra subspinipes dehaani*. So, this study presents the first confirmed report of the species from the state (Figure 5C).

3.2. Key Insights

The distributional patterns of the newly recorded scolopendrid species across the districts of West Bengal are illustrated in Figure 5. In addition to these species, several other Scolopendrid species have been reported from West Bengal in earlier literature but are not currently present in the state. Notably, *Cormocephalus macrosestrus* (Attems, 1928) was originally described with two type localities, one of which was Calcutta. However, this was later deemed erroneous, and Bonato et al. (2016) restricted the type locality to the Western Ghats. Khanna (1994b, 2010, 2020) reported the presence of *Rhysida afra* (Peters, 1855) in West Bengal. However, this species has since been restricted to South Africa (Joshi et al., 2020). Similarly, *Rhysida nuda*

Figure 4. Diagnostic characters of *Scolopendra subspinipes* Leach, 1815**: A.** Cephalic plate with antennal articles, **B**. Tooth plate, **C.** Sternite with Paramedian Suture, **D.** Tergite with margination, **E.** Tergite 21 with Ultimate leg Prefemur. Scale bars: A-E: 1 mm

immarginata (Newport, 1845) was recorded from the state by Khanna (1994a, 2006, 2010), but *Rhysida nuda* is now considered endemic to Australia (Joshi et al., 2020). *Rhysida immarginata immarginata* (Porat, 1876), also reported from West Bengal by Balan and Sureshan (2018), has likewise been restricted to Southeast Asia by Joshi et al. (2020).

In the present study, most of the species documented from the state are endemic to India, except *Scolopendra subspinipes* Leach, 1815, which exhibits a broad global distribution, including regions such as Africa, Hong Kong, Irian Jaya, Laos, Peninsular Malaysia, Philippines, Sarawak, Seychelles, Singapore, South America, Sri Lanka, Sulawesi, Sumatra, Surinam, and Vietnam.

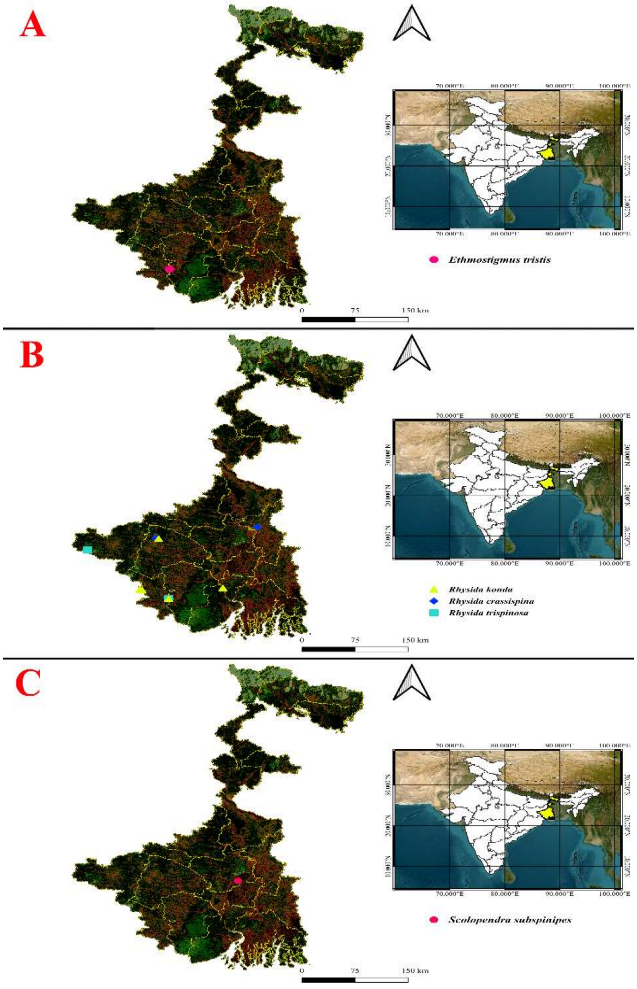

Figure 5. Mapping the distribution of newly recorded Scolopendridae species across West Bengal, India: **A.** *Ethmostigmus tristis* (Meinert, 1886), **B.** *Rhysida* spp., **C.** *Scolopendra subspinipes* Leach, 1815

3.3. List of Members of the Family Scolopendridae in West Bengal

A comprehensive compilation of a total of eighteen species of Scolopendrid centipedes collected and documented to date from various districts of West Bengal is presented in Table 1. Among these, *Ethmostigmus pygomegas* (Kohlrausch, 1881) has previously been reported from the Eastern Himalaya (Schileyko & Stagl, 2004; Schileyko & Stoev, 2016); therefore, its distribution in West Bengal is presumed to be confined to the Himalayan districts. *Otostigmus scaber* Porat, 1876 was previously recorded from West Bengal as *Otostigmus insularis* Hasse, 1887, without a precise locality (Khanna, 1994a), and was subsequently synonymised by Chao and Chen (2003). As we have collected and examined the specimens of this species during the present study, its occurrence in this state is hereby confirmed. *Scolopendra dehaani* Brandt, 1840, was previously recorded from West Bengal as *Scolopendra subspinipes dehaani*. Kronmüller (2012) elevated it to the species level. Overall, this study refines the taxonomy and distributional records of scolopendrid centipedes in West Bengal, providing a more accurate baseline for future research and biodiversity assessments.

4. CONCLUSION

As a result of this study, five species of Scolopendrid centipedes are newly recorded, thereby increasing the total number of species known from West Bengal to eighteen (Table 1). These findings indicate that the scolopendrid fauna of West Bengal remains inadequately explored despite the state possessing a wide range of physiographic and ecological conditions. The diverse topography of West Bengal, extending from the Himalayan foothills and Terai region in the north to the Gangetic plains, lateritic western plateau, coastal tracts, and mangrove ecosystems of the Sundarbans, provides a variety of habitats suitable for centipede diversity and distribution. Further extensive and systematic surveys across the state, particularly in understudied regions with diverse microhabitats such as seasonal rainfall zones, open canopies, leaf-litter accumulation, fluctuating temperature and moisture conditions, are likely to reveal additional new or poorly known species, thereby enhancing our understanding and documentation of the region's biodiversity.

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CRediT authorship contribution statement

Soumi Mukherjee: Conceptualisation, Methodology, Formal analysis, Investigation, Data Curation, Writing - Original Draft. Sumidh Ray: Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing - Original Draft. Uttam Kumar Chaudhary: Data Curation, Investigation, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing - Original Draft. Priyadarshi Girija Sankar Sethy: Validation, Writing - Review & Editing, Resources, Supervision, and Funding acquisition.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

The authors declare no use of AI tools in the writing process.

Data availability statement

Data is available and can be made available on demand.

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Supplementary Material Link

https://www.indianjecol.org/storage/publication_files/supplementary_IJECOL-26-0097_1779797184.pdf