

Notes on jumping spiders of the genus *Stenaelurillus* from the Indian subcontinent (Araneae: Salticidae: Aelurillini: Aelurillina)

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Stenaelurillus Simon 1886 is a large tropical Afroeurasian genus of medium-sized jumping spiders that live on or near the ground. Like the unrelated genera *Habronattus* F. O. Pickard-Cambridge 1901 of North America and *Maratus* Karsch 1978 of Australia, male *Stenaelurillus* can be highly ornamented (Figure 1), and their legs III are at least as long as legs IV, sometimes significantly longer. The longer legs III may contribute to the vertical component of their jumps, something useful to a ground-dwelling salticid.

Prior to 2000, only 3 species of the genus *Stenaelurillus* Simon 1886 were known from the Indian subcontinent. With a growing interest in this genus in recent years, that number has now grown to 24 (Table 1; Figures 2-3). Most *Stenaelurillus* species in this region (14 of 24) have been described in the last six years, subsequent to the reviews of this palaeotropical genus by Wesolowska (2014) and Logunov & Azarkina (2018). A total of 59 *Stenaelurillus* species have now been described (WSC 2024). Here we present our observations of some of the better-known *Stenaelurillus* from India.



Figure 1. Ground-dwelling salticids from three different continents. 1, ♂ *Habronattus ophrys* Griswold 1987, from Colwood, British Columbia. 2, ♂ *Maratus occasus* Schubert 2019, from Nandi, Queensland. 3, ♂ *Stenaelurillus lesserti* Reimoser 1934, from Chennai, Tami Nadu. Photo credits: 1, © Thomas Barbin, iNAT obs. 222932201; 2, © Dee Newton, iNat obs. 196010411; 3, © Saravanaraja Thyagarajan, iNat obs. 129019973. All photos CC BY-NC 4.0, modified from originals.

Table 1. Published records of *Stenaelurillus* species from the Indian subcontinent.

| # | species | ♂♀ | reference | locality | |
|----|---|----------------------------|--|--|----------------------|
| 1 | <i>albus</i> Sebastian, Sankaran, Malamel & Joseph 2015 | ♂♀ | Sebastian et al. 2015 | Kurisumudi, Malayatoor, Kerala | N10.20927, E76.50246 |
| | | ♂ | Sudhin et al. 2023 | Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary, Karnataka | N13.82778, E74.80167 |
| | | ♂ | Sudhin et al. 2023 | Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary, Kerala | N8.53442, E77.15026 |
| | | ♂ | Sudhin et al. 2023 | Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary, Kerala | N8.85813, E77.21754 |
| 2 | <i>arambagensis</i> (Biswas & Biswas 1992) | ♂♀ | (Biswas & Biswas 1992) | Chandur Forest, Arambagh, West Bengal | N22.91000, E87.76000 |
| | | ♂ | Logunov & Azarkina 2018 | Jehlum, Pakistan | N32.08300, E73.06700 |
| | | ♂♀ | (<i>digitus</i>) Prajapati et al. 2016 | Vijaynagar, Sabarkantha, Gujarat | N23.99896, E73.28022 |
| | | ♂♀ | Caleb et al. 2017 | Cherlopalle, Kanigiri, Andhra Pradesh | N15.27815, E79.57153 |
| | | ♂♀ | Caleb et al. 2017 | Jalgaon, Maharashtra | N20.97550, E75.56543 |
| | | ♂♀ | Sudhin et al. 2023 | Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary, Andhra Pradesh | N16.82124, E82.29822 |
| | | ♂ | Sudhin et al. 2023 | Nalanda, Bihar | N25.11955, E85.45496 |
| | | ♂ | Sudhin et al. 2023 | Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary, Bihar | N24.90780, E83.53136 |
| | | ♂♀ | Sudhin et al. 2023 | Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary, Karnataka | N13.82778, E74.80167 |
| | | ♀ | Sudhin et al. 2023 | Udupi, Karnataka | N13.34025, E74.74029 |
| | | ♀ | Sudhin et al. 2023 | Bahour, Puducherry | N11.80814, E79.74616 |
| | | ♀ | Sudhin et al. 2023 | Karaikal, Puducherry | N10.92645, E79.83607 |
| | | ♀ | Sudhin et al. 2023 | Mahe, Puducherry | N11.71241, E75.53371 |
| | | ♀ | Sudhin et al. 2023 | Thiruvarur, Tamil Nadu | N10.77651, E79.65546 |
| ♀ | Sudhin et al. 2023 | Palashbagan, West Bengal | N24.69350, E86.98485 | | |
| ♀ | Sudhin et al. 2023 | Susunia Hills, West Bengal | N23.39374, E86.97988 | | |
| ♂♀ | Tripathi et al. 2024 | Telangana, Maharashtra | N16.88736, E77.47558 | | |
| 3 | <i>belihuloya</i> Logunov & Azarkina 2018 | ♂ | Logunov & Azarkina 2018 | Belihuloya, Sri Lanka | N6.71839, E80.77408 |
| 4 | <i>feral</i> Tripathi, Kuni & Kadam 2024 | ♂ | Tripathi et al. 2024 | Villupuram, Tamil Nadu | N11.98144, E79.78119 |
| 5 | <i>gabrieli</i> Prajapati, Murthappa, Sankaran & Sebastian 2016 | ♂♀ | Prajapati et al. 2016 | Dharampur, Gujarat | N20.49487, E73.33116 |
| | | ♀ | Prajapati et al. 2016 | Vansda, Gujarat | N20.69369, E73.53585 |
| | | ♀ | Prajapati et al. 2016 | Ahmedabad, Gujarat | N23.03886, E72.54328 |
| | | ♂♀ | Tripathi et al. 2024 | Sindhudurg, Maharashtra | N16.04750, E73.71167 |
| 6 | <i>ilesai</i> Kanesharatnam & Benjamin 2020 | ♂♀ | Kanesharatnam & Benjamin 2020 | Mihintale Sanctuary, Sri Lanka | N8.35059, E80.51694 |
| | | ♂♀ | Kanesharatnam & Benjamin 2020 | Allepethana, Sri Lanka | N8.44949, E80.77771 |
| | | ♂ | Kanesharatnam & Benjamin 2020 | Udawattakelle, Sri Lanka | N7.29833, E80.64139 |
| 7 | <i>indicus</i> Logunov 2020 | ♂♀ | Logunov 2020 | Tettu, Andhra Pradesh | N15.04100, E80.00700 |
| 8 | <i>jagannathae</i> Das, Malik & Vidhel 2015 | ♂♀ | Videl et al. 2015 | Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary, Delhi | N28.47611, E77.23000 |
| | | ♂♀ | Maheshwari & Chopda 2017 | Jalgaon, Maharashtra | N20.97550, E75.56543 |
| 9 | <i>judithbleisterae</i> Kadam, Tripathi & Kuni 2024 | ♂♀ | Tripathi et al. 2024 | Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu | N11.10278, E76.78333 |
| 10 | <i>lesserti</i> Reimoser 1934 | ♂ | Reimoser 1934 | Pollachi, Tamil Nadu | N10.66115, E77.00482 |
| | | ♀ | Reimoser 1934 | Masinagudi, Tamil Nadu | N11.57216, E80.76419 |
| | | ♂♀ | Sebastian et al. 2015 | Cherukadu, Kerala | N10.13958, E76.66726 |
| | | ♂ | Caleb & Sanap 2016 | Tambaram, Tamil Nadu | N12.91852, E80.12001 |
| | | ♂♀ | Caleb & Sanap 2016 | Tambaram, Tamil Nadu | N12.91766, E80.12286 |
| | | ♂♀ | Caleb & Sanap 2016 | Tambaram, Tamil Nadu | N12.92023, E80.12348 |
| | | ♂ | Caleb & Sanap 2016 | Turunelveli, Tamil Nadu | N9.41225, E77.34872 |
| | | ♂♀ | Caleb & Sanap 2016 | Bangalore, Karnataka | N13.07261, E77.57900 |
| | | ♂♀ | Caleb 2020 | Chennai, Tamil Nadu | N12.92118, E80.12208 |
| | | ♂ | Logunov 2020 | Hambantota, Sri Lanka | N6.11667, E81.11667 |
| | | ♂♀ | Logunov 2020 | Baptala, Andhra Pradesh | N15.86000, E80.49000 |
| 11 | <i>mardanicus</i> Ali & Maddison 2018 | ♂♀ | Tripathi et al. 2024 | Bharati Nagar, Puducherry | N11.95672, E79.82769 |
| | | ♂ | Ali et al. 2018 | Mardan, Pakistan | N34.37400, E72.37200 |
| 12 | <i>marusiki</i> Logunov 2001 | ♀ | Ali et al. 2018 | Mardan, Pakistan | N34.38100, E72.38400 |
| | | ♂ | Logunov 2001 | Fars Province, Iran | N26.60000, E52.53333 |
| | | ♂ | Logunov 2001 | Fars Province, Iran | N29.75000, E52.75000 |
| | | ♂♀ | Marathe et al. 2022 | Sinnar, Maharashtra | N19.87100, E74.02000 |
| | | ♂ | Parmar et al. 2024 | Meva Village, Gujarat | N23.32550, E69.27380 |
| 13 | <i>megamalai</i> Sudhin, Sen & Caleb 2023 | ♂ | Parmar et al. 2024 | Taranga, Gujarat | N23.96940, E72.74440 |
| | | ♂♀ | Sudin et al. 2023 | Megamalai Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu | N9.64281, E77.40181 |
| 14 | <i>metallicus</i> Caleb & Mathai 2016 | ♂♀ | Caleb & Mathai 2016 | Chennai, Tamil Nadu | N12.91766, E80.12286 |
| | | ♂♀ | Caleb 2020 | Chennai, Tamil Nadu | N12.92118, E80.12208 |
| 15 | <i>naldurg</i> Kuni, Kadam & Tripathi 2024 | ♂♀ | Tripathi et al. 2024 | Naldurg area, Dharashiv, Maharashtra | N17.79400, E76.29914 |
| 16 | <i>neyyar</i> Sudhin, Sen & Caleb 2023 | ♂♀ | Sudhin et al. 2023 | Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary, Kerala | N8.53442, E77.14856 |
| | | ♂♀ | Tripathi et al. 2024 | Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu | N8.19917, E77.41972 |
| 17 | <i>sarojinae</i> Caleb & Mathai 2014 | ♀ | Caleb & Mathai 2014 | Kadapa, Andhra Pradesh | N14.75292, E79.32741 |
| | | ♂ | Caleb et al. 2015 | Kadapa, Andhra Pradesh | N14.75292, E79.32741 |
| | | ♂♀ | Marathe et al. 2022 | Mysuru, Karnataka | N12.21550, E76.62500 |
| 18 | <i>shwetamukhi</i> Marathe, Sanap, & Maddison 2022 | ♂♀ | Marathe et al. 2022 | Agastya Foundation, Andhra Pradesh | N12.82550, E78.25250 |
| | | ♂ | Marathe et al. 2022 | Kamalapur, Karnataka | N13.21660, E77.19130 |
| 19 | <i>solapur</i> Kuni, Tripathi & Kadam 2024 | ♂♀ | Tripathi et al. 2024 | Solapur, Maharashtra | N17.67003, E75.96894 |
| 20 | <i>tamravarni</i> Marathe & Maddison 2022 | ♂♀ | Marathe et al. 2022 | Agastya Foundation campus, Andhra Pradesh | N12.82550, E78.25250 |
| | | ♂ | Tripathi et al. 2024 | Bangalore, Karnataka | N12.90875, E77.36656 |
| 21 | <i>tettu</i> Logunov 2020 | ♂♀ | Logunov 2020 | Tettu, Andhra Pradesh | N15.04100, E80.00700 |
| 22 | <i>triguttatus</i> Simon 1886 | ♂ | Simon 1886 | Tibet | |
| | | ♂ | Wesołowska 2014 | Narayangarh, Nepal | N27.68333, E84.43333 |
| 23 | <i>vyaghri</i> Sanap, Joglekar & Caleb 2022 | ♂♀ | Marathe et al. 2022 | Sinnar, Maharashtra | N19.87100, E74.02000 |
| | | ♂♀ | Parmar et al. 2024 | Danta Village, Maharashtra | N24.19250, E72.78333 |
| | | ♂♀ | Logunov 2020 | Banigocha-Daspalla, Odisha | N20.38200, E84.77100 |
| 24 | <i>wandae</i> Logunov 2020 | ♂ | Sudhin et al. 2023 | Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary, Bihar | N24.90780, E83.53136 |

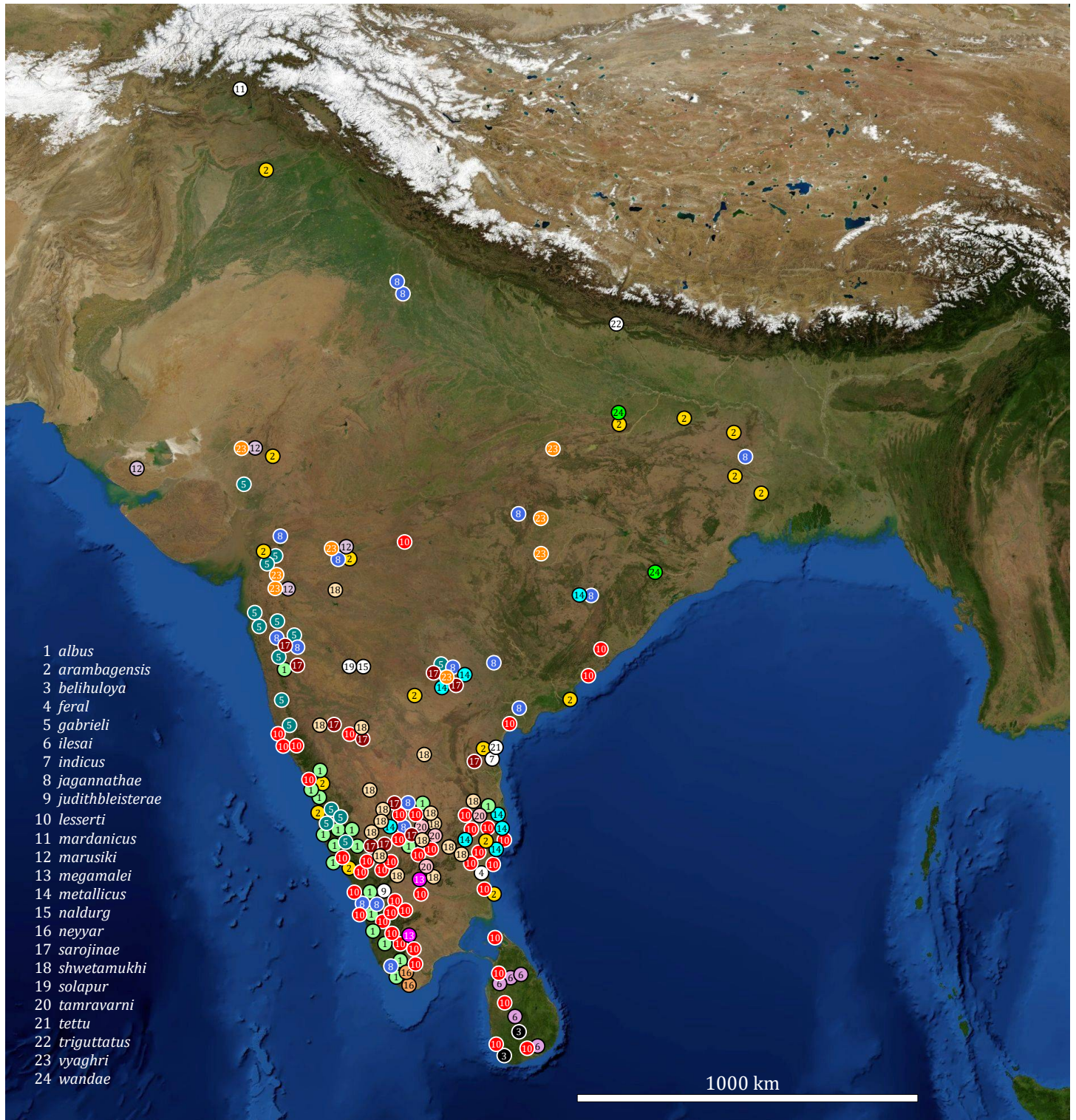


Figure 2. Localities where *Stenaelurillus* species have been found in the Indian subcontinent, based on published records (Table 1) and records posted in iNaturalist. Species known from a single locality are shown in white circles. Reference numbers correspond to those shown in Table 1.



Figure 3 (continued on next page). *Stenaelurillus* from the Indian subcontinent. 1-2, ♂ (1) and ♀ (2) *S. albus*, Taklakaveri Wildlife Sanctuary, Karnataka. 3-5, ♂ *S. lesserti*, Bengaluru. 6, ♂ *S. lesserti*, Mysuru. Photo credits: 1-2, © Manjunath Acharya, CC BY-NC 4.0, iNat obs. 99196711; 3-5, Amith Kiran Menezes; 6, © Hardeep Gazdar, CC BY-NC 4.0, iNat obs. 152020941. All modified from originals.



Figure 3 (continued from previous page, continued on next page). *Stenaelurillus* from the Indian subcontinent. 7-9, ♀ *S. lesserti*, Bengaluru. 10-12, ♂ *S. sarojinae*. 13-15, ♀ *S. sarojinae*. 16-17, ♂ *Stenaelurillus* sp. indet., Bengaluru. Photo credits: 7-9, 16-17, Amith Kiran Menezes; 10-13, Vipin Baliga; 14-15, Abhijith.



Figure 3 (continued from previous page). *Stenaelurillus* from the Indian subcontinent. **18-19**, *Stenaelurillus* sp. indet., Audala, Karnataka. **20-21**, *Stenaelurillus* sp. indet., Mumbai metropolitan region, Maharashtra. Photo credits: 18-19, © Hardeep Gazdar, CC BY-NC 4.0, iNat obs. 187982076 (18), iNat obs. 208517094 (19); 20-21, © Dinish Sharma, CC BY-NC 4.0, iNat obs. 202158344. All modified from originals.

Prey. *Stenaelurillus* species may prey on a variety of insects (Figure 4). However we lack systematic field studies to determine what they actually prey on at their various life stages.

Records posted on iNaturalist suggest that at least some, if not most, members of this genus specialize on termites. The best known of these termite-eaters are from Africa (Figure 5). When the African *S. termitophagus* (Wesołowska & Cumming 1999) was described, it was thought to represent the only salticid known to prey on termites. It lives on "open-vented termite mounds, where it feeds, nests and mates" (Wesołowska & Cumming 1999). During pre-mating and mating seasons (later February to mid-May), up to 50 *S. termitophagus* may aggregate on a termite mound, to feed and also to engage in both agonistic and courtship behavior. These aggregations (Figure 5.1) are remarkable.

It is now known that the African *S. guttiger* (Simon 1901) also feeds on termites (Figures 5.4-5.6), as does the unrelated chrysilline jumping spider *Heliophanus termitophagus* Wesołowska & Haddad 2002. Our new records of predation on termites by several *Stenaelurillus* on the Indian subcontinent (Figures 6-7) support the idea that termites comprise an important part of the diet of many species in this genus. In the absence of more detailed field studies, we cannot say that they are *termite specialists*, but even the inclusion of termites in their diet is quite unusual, not only for a salticid, but for a spider of any kind.



Figure 4. Predation on insects by *Stenaelurillus*. **1-3**, ♂ *S. albus* feeding on a cricket, Yellapura, Karnataka. **4**, ♂ *S. sarojinae* feeding on a leaf hopper, Belagavi, Karnataka. Photo credits: 1-3, © Naveen Iyer, CC BY-NC 4.0, iNAT obs. 110941946; 4, © M Shashikan Kambannavar. All photos modified from originals.



Figure 5. Predation on termites by African *Stenaelurillus*. **1**, *S. termitophagus* group at open vent of termite mound, Harare, Zimbabwe. **2-3**, *S. termitophagus*, South Africa. **4**, *S. guttiger*, South Africa. **5-6**, *S. guttiger*, Serowe, Botswana. Photo credits: 1, © Spider Club of Zimbabwe, CC BY-NC 4.0, iNAT obs. 64426912; 2-4, © Wynand Uys CC BY-NC 4.0. iNAT obs. 11207155 (2-3), 11213416 (4). All photos modified from originals.



Figure 6. Predation on termites by Indian *Stenaelurillus*. **1**, ♀ *Stenaelurillus* sp. indet., Bengaluru. **2**, ♂ *S. lesserti*, Bengaluru. **3-4**, Penultimate ♂ *S. lesserti* (?), Bengaluru. **5-6**, ♀ *S. lesserti*, Bengaluru. Photo credits: 1-6, Amith Kiran Menezes.



Figure 7. Predation on termites by Indian *Stenaelurillus*. **1-2**, ♀ *Stenaelurillus neyyar*, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu. **3-4**, ♂ *S. sarojinae*, Karnataka. Photo credits: 1-2, © Hopeland, CC BY 4.0, iNAT obs. 202398280; 3-4, Abhijith.

Enemies. *Stenaelurillus* may be preyed upon by larger spiders, including salticids (Figures 8-9), but field studies are needed to know the impact of these and other predators or parasitoids on natural populations. We also do not know anything about the relationship of *Stenaelurillus* to the ants that they encounter.



Figure 8. Predation on adult ♂ *Stenaelurillus lesserti* by larger spiders in Bengaluru. **1-2**, Predation by running crab spiders (Philodromidae). **3**, Predation by a lynx spider (Oxyopidae). Photo credits: 1-3, Amith Kiran Menezes.



Figure 9. Predation on a *Stenaelurillus gabrieli* by another jumping spider (*Lagona* sp.), Kalanjimale reserve forest, Mangalore, Karnataka. Photo credits: 1-3, Abhijith.

Courtship. Apart from one study of *Stenaelurillus megamalai* (as *Stenaelurillus* sp., Muralidharan & Hill 2022), we know little about the courtship display of *Stenaelurillus* species. Males that we have observed extend their raise their forelegs (legs I) and advance toward a female during courtship. However, the details of this approach vary by species. Presently we can identify four different positions assumed by a male *Stenaelurillus* during this approach (Table 2, Figures 10-16).

Table 2. Display positions assumed by courting male *Stenaelurillus*.

| display | description | species | reference |
|---------|--|---|----------------------------|
| 1 | legs I, partly flexed, directed to the front, pedipalps lowered to expose clypeus | <i>S. albus</i> | Figure 11 |
| 2 | legs I extended to the sides to expose prolateral side of femora, pedipalps turned to meet at the midline, while lowered and rotated forward to expose the clypeus | <i>S. lesserti</i> | Figure 10 |
| 3 | legs I extended to the sides to expose prolateral side of femora, pedipalps turned to meet at the midline, covering the clypeus and chelicerae | <i>S. megamalai</i> | Muhralidharan & Hill 2022 |
| 4 | legs I extended and elevated to expose ventral aspect, pedipalps extended widely to the sides to expose ventral aspect, abdomen elevated, spinnerets extended | <i>S. sarojinae</i> <i>S. sp. indet.</i> | Figures 12-15 Figure 16 |



Figure 10. Courtship display by a ♂ *Stenaelurillus lesserti*, Bengaluru (Table 2: display 2). Note how legs I were extended laterally to exposit the bright red scale cover of each prolateral (anterior) femur I, greatly extending the red field of the clypeus, with a well-marked band of iridescent violet scales above this. The position of the pedipalps during this display is also distinctive. Photo credits: 1-3, Amith Kiran Menezes.

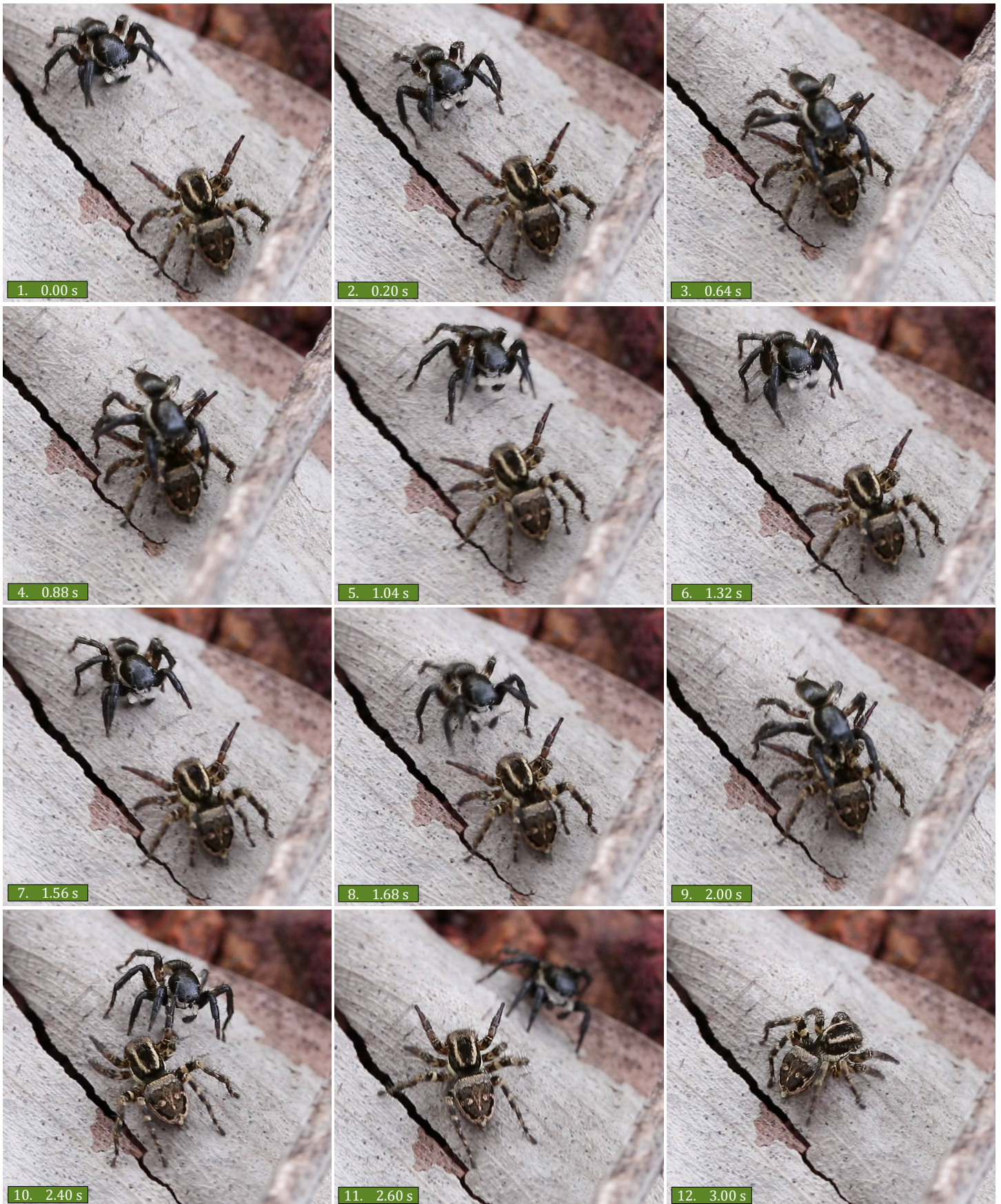


Figure 11. Sequential frames from a 25 fps video of a ♂ *Stenaelurillus albus* (above) attempting to approach and mount a female (Table 2: display 1), Mangalore, Karnataka. The bright white clypeal setae, together with the bright white setae of the pedipalps contrasting with the otherwise black color of the male face. Photo credit: 1-12, Jithesh Pai.



Figure 12. Sequential photographs of the courtship display of a ♂ *Stenaelurillus sarojinae* (Table 2: display 4). Note how both legs I and the pedipalps were extended to the sides, thus displaying their dark ventral surfaces to the female. In addition the abdomen was raised and the pedipalps extended, a display seen in few salticids but well known for the peacock spiders (*Maratus*) of Australia. Although *S. megamalei* may also raise the abdomen like this during courtship, it does not appear to be elevated in the main display of that species (Muhralidharan & Hill 2022). Photo credits: 1-9, Vipin Baliga.

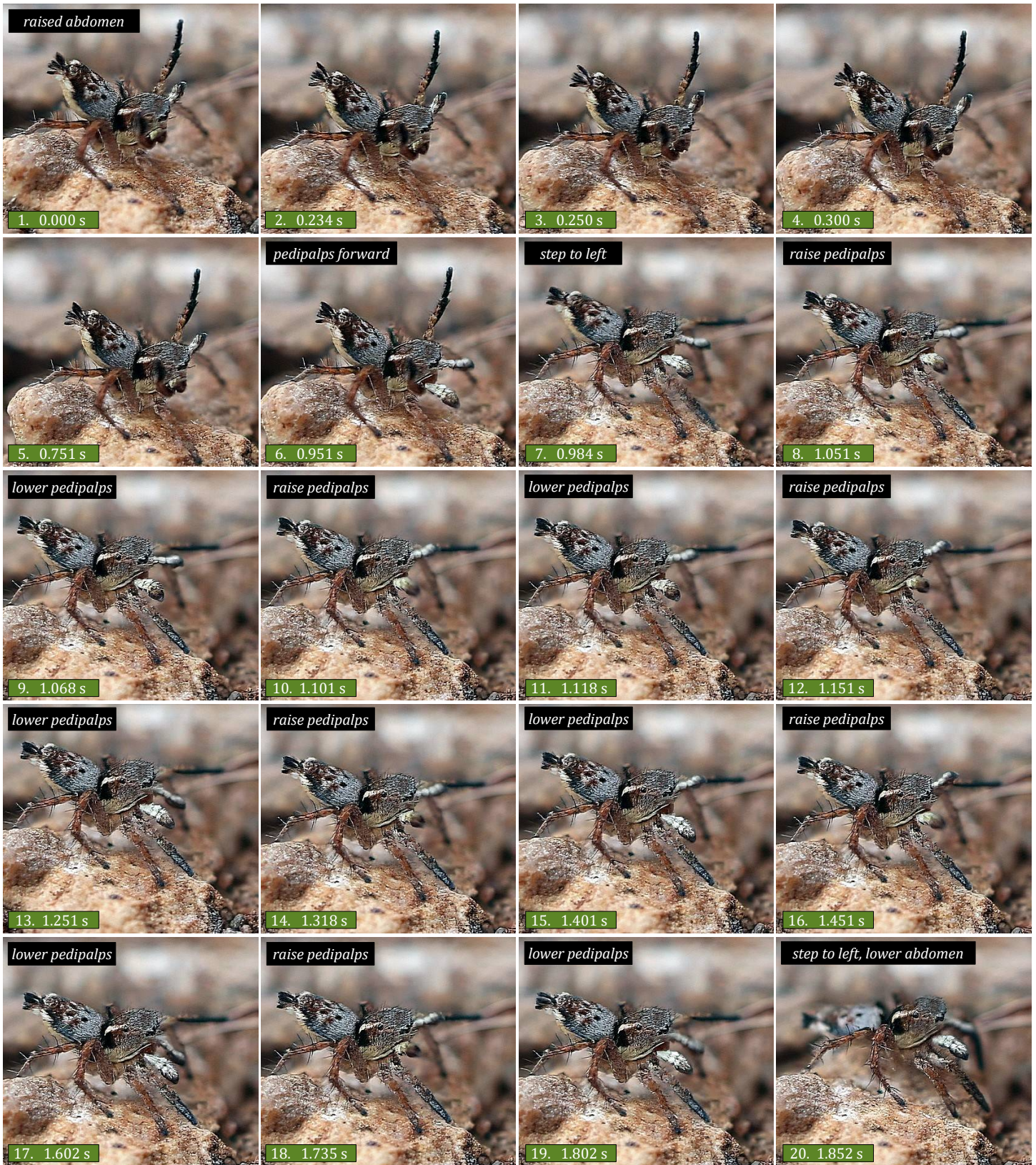


Figure 13. Sequential frames of the courtship display of a ♂ *Stenaelurillus sarojinae*, from a 59.94 fps video. **1-5**, Main display position, with pedipalps extended laterally. Subsequently the pedipalps were waved up and down as the abdomen was lowered. Photo credits: 1-20, Vipin Baliga.



Figure 14. Courtship display by a ♂ *Stenaelurillus sarojinae*, in front of an attentive ♀ (at left). Photo credits: 1-2, Abhijith.



Figure 15. Sequential frames from a 30 fps video showing a courtship display by a ♂ *Stenaelurillus sarojinae*, in front of an attentive ♀ (at left). This male advanced (1), then jumped forward (2-3), but subsequently backed off and 44 s later (4) displayed to the female when she turned in his direction. Photo credits: 1-4, Abhijith.



Figure 16. Courtship display by a ♂ *Stenaelurillus* sp. indet., Gajendraghada, Gadag District, Karnataka (Table 2: display 4). The positions of legs I, pedipalps, the elevated abdomen, and the extended spinnerets are like those of *S. sarojinae*, without doubt a close relative. Photo credits: 1-3, Vipin Baliga.

Mating. In general, male salticids approach females from the front, then climb over the carapace and turn the abdomen first to one side, and then the other, to reach the epigynum with each pedipalp. *Stenaelurillus lesserti* is unusual in this respect, in that the male approaches the female from the side and rear to mate (Figures 17-18).



Figure 17 (continued on next page). Photos showing the unusual mating position of *Stenaelurillus lesserti*, Bengaluru, with the male approaching the female from the side and rear. Photo credit: 1, Amith Kiran Menezes.



Figure 17 (continued from previous page). Photos showing the unusual mating position of *Stenaelurillus lesserti*, Bengaluru, with the male approaching the female from the side and rear. Photo credits: 2-7, Amith Kiran Menezes.



Figure 18. Selected sequential frames from a 25 fps video, showing the unusual mating position of *Stenaelurillus lesserti*, Bengaluru, with the male approaching the female from the side and rear. Photo credits: 1-4, Amith Kiran Menezes.

Habitat. *Stenaelurillus* live on or near the ground, and are often found in large numbers or even aggregations (see Figure 6.1). Nonetheless we know little about their sociality. *S. albus* makes its shelter in leaf litter (Figure 19).



Figure 19. Habitat of *Stenaelurillus albus* in Karnataka. **1**, Exploring at ground level. **2-3**, Two views of a shelter inside of a dry, coiled leaf. Photo credit: 1-3, Abhijith.

Acknowledgements

We thank the photographers and naturalists who contributed to iNaturalist and made their photos available by either a [CC BY 4.0](#) or a [CC BY-NC 4.0](#) license. We also thank Mr. Harish Gowda, Mr. Prashanth Krishna, Mr. Pradhyumna Acharya and Mr. Aravinda Kudla who were with us during the documentation of *Stenaelurillus sarojinae*.

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