Takydromus ultapaniensis: A New Grass Lizard Species from Assam

Study/source reference: description paper: Zootaxa, 3 March 2026; news report: March 2026 (NorthEast Now)
Actual publication date: 20 October 2026
Environment/biology: new species discovery, northeast biodiversity

News context:

According to the description paper published in the international journal Zootaxa on 3 March 2026, researchers have scientifically described a new species of Asian grass lizard, Takydromus ultapaniensis, from Ultapani (the Manas biosphere landscape) in Assam's Kokrajhar district. As per a NorthEast Now (March 2026) report, the discovery was led by Basundhara Chettri of Sikkim University and colleagues; the authors include Rabina Mothe, Sudeep Ghatani, V. Deepak and Anant Rai.

Note: in the treatment records (Plazi/Zenodo) of the original description paper (Zootaxa), the original spelling is "Takydromus ultapaniensis sp. nov.", while some news reports have printed "ultapanensis"; this article follows the original scientific spelling. As per the original description paper, the holotype is ZSI-R-28647 (male) and the paratypes include ZSI-R-28646 (female).

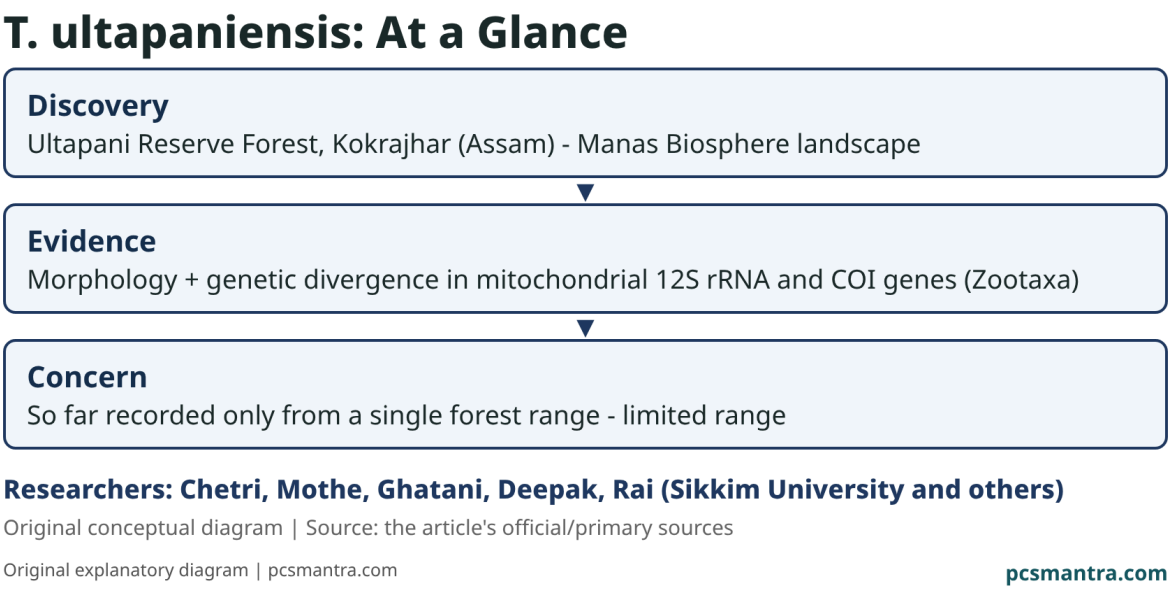
T. ultapaniensis: at a glance

Discovery: Ultapani Reserve Forest, Kokrajhar (Assam) - Manas biosphere landscape

Evidence: morphology + genetic difference in the mitochondrial 12S rRNA and COI genes (Zootaxa)

Concern: recorded so far from a single forest range only - a limited range

Researchers: Chettri, Mothe, Ghatani, Deepak, Rai (Sikkim University and others)



Features of the species:

As per Zootaxa's abstract, the new species was identified apart from its relatives by distinctive morphological traits and notable genetic difference in the mitochondrial 12S rRNA and COI genes. The study also added molecular data unavailable for T. sikkimensis and T. khasiensis and reviewed the lineage relationships of the Takydromus species of the Indian subcontinent.

As per the NorthEast Now report, unlike its mostly similar montane/subtropical relatives, this new species lives in lowland plain semi-evergreen forests, where waterlogged grasslands and fern patches are scattered; the researchers recorded them basking on fern bushes in open patches cut by seasonal water channels.

Conservation view:

As per the report, this species has so far been recorded only from the single range of the Ultapani Reserve Forest - such a limited range is a matter of conservation concern, because its habitat (areas with waterlogged vegetation and seasonal flooding) is ecologically distinctive.

With this discovery, the number of Takydromus species recorded from northeast India has become five; the study reports mention the Brahmaputra river and associated ecological barriers as possible factors driving speciation in the region.

Prelims: Practice Questions

Question 1. Which statement is correct about Takydromus ultapaniensis?

(a) It is a fish found in the mountain streams of the Western Ghats

(b) It is a new grasshopper species described in Current Science

(c) It is a new grass lizard species described from Ultapani (Manas landscape) in Assam's Kokrajhar district, whose account was published in Zootaxa (3 March 2026)

(d) It is a common species found in Arunachal Pradesh that already has a wide range

Answer and Explanation
Answer: (c). As per Zootaxa (3 March 2026), this new grass lizard was described from Ultapani, Kokrajhar (Assam); it is not a fish/grasshopper and is so far limited to a single forest range.

Question 2. On what basis was the new species confirmed?

(a) Only from photographs

(b) From distinctive morphological traits and genetic difference in the mitochondrial 12S rRNA and COI genes

(c) Only from local folk knowledge

(d) Only from a comparison of habitats

Answer and Explanation
Answer: (b). As per Zootaxa's abstract, the description is based on both morphological traits and notable genetic difference in the mitochondrial genes (12S rRNA, COI).

Question 3. Choose the correct statement about this species' habitat:

(a) It lives mainly in montane and subtropical forests

(b) It is found in dry scrub desert areas

(c) It has been recorded only in tea gardens

(d) It lives in lowland plain semi-evergreen forests, among waterlogged grasslands and fern patches

Answer and Explanation
Answer: (d). As per NorthEast Now (March 2026), unlike its montane relatives, T. ultapaniensis belongs to the plain semi-evergreen forests with waterlogged grasslands and fern patches.

Sources:

Zootaxa: a new Takydromus species from northeast India, 3 March 2026

NorthEast Now: a new grass lizard in the Manas landscape, March 2026 (news report)

Treatment record of the original description (Zenodo/Plazi): Takydromus ultapaniensis sp. nov. (original spelling and type specimens)