

Natural History Snippets

Brief reports by members based on their observations of nature
 Members are invited to submit their photographs and stories to muhudubella@gmail.com for publication



ACAVIDAE

A Family of Land Snails in Sri Lanka with Two Endemic Genera

Acavus snails were seen on the forest trees alongside the road at Ibbagamuwa in September 2005. Whitish, or more commonly green, with a covering of algae in their natural environment, they glow with colours of deep reds, pinks, black and white when cleaned. Commonly called *veda bella* වෙද බෙල්ල on account of the mucilaginous secretions used as a soothing application in local folk medicine, there are three species of tree-dwelling snails of the genus *Acavus*, and three species of the ground-dwelling genus *Oligospira* in Sri Lanka. They are herbivores, often descending on to the forest floor at night to feed on fallen fruits.



Acavus phoenix
Meethirigala, 22.10.2017



Acavus haemostoma
Weligama, 5.8.1979



Acavus haemostoma f. *fastosus*
Weligama, 5.8.1979



Acavus haemostoma f. *melanotragus*, Bentota, 13.7.1980



Acavus superbus f. *roseolabiatius*
Kitulgala, 26.6.1981



Oligospira waltoni
Duckwari Estate, Rangala, 15.2.1987

The large, colourful shells of *Acavus* make them much sought after by collectors overseas, not least because they are endemic to the Island. *A. phoenix* is more often quite pale, almost white, with a few patches of brown. The shell illustrated is a particularly intensely coloured one. Most were found on the trunks of trees like coconut and arecanut, 3 to 4 metres above ground. Others on forest trees, and the Weligama specimens on pawpaw trees in the back garden of a residence in town. They are found in the south-west quarter of the island. Look for green blobs on the trunks of palm trees amongst habitations.

The *Oligospira* was in the undergrowth in forest above a tea plantation at Rangala.

Malik Fernando, 20.3.2023