



***Angustopila milium* (Gastropoda: Hypselostomatidae) is one of the most widespread land snail species in South and Southeast Asia, due to its conspecificity with *A. elevata*, syn. nov.**

***Angustopila milium* (Gastropoda: Hypselostomatidae) – один из наиболее распространенных видов наземных улиток в Южной и Юго-Восточной Азии вследствие его конспецифичности с *A. elevata*, syn. nov.**


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Abstract. *Angustopila elevata* (Thompson et Upatham, 1997) was originally described from northern Thailand. It is the most widespread species within the genus *Angustopila* Jochum, Slapnik et Páll-Gergely, 2014, as revealed by a recent revision. The distribution of this species extends from southern Thailand through northern Laos and northern Vietnam to the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in Southern China. Based on shells recently collected in India, conspecificity was established between *A. milium* (Benson, 1853) and *A. elevata*, **syn. nov.** Furthermore, *A. milium* is reported from Nepal for the first time. *Angustopila milium* thus becomes the most widespread species of this genus and one of the most widely distributed land-snail species in South and Southeast Asia.

Резюме. *Angustopila elevata* (Thompson et Upatham, 1997) был описан из северного Таиланда. Последняя ревизия рода *Angustopila* Jochum, Slapnik et Páll-Gergely, 2014 показала, что это наиболее широко распространённый вид рода. Его ареал простирается от южного Таиланда через северный Лаос и северный Вьетнам до Гуанси-Чжуанского автономного района в Южном Китае. На основе раковин, недавно собранных в Индии, показана конспецифичность *A. milium* (Benson, 1853) и *A. elevata*, **syn. nov.** Кроме того, впервые сообщается о находках *A. milium* в Непале. *Angustopila milium* становится самым широко распространённым видом этого рода и, одним из самых распространённых видов наземных улиток в Восточной Азии.

Key words: East Asia, Southeast Asia, terrestrial gastropods, taxonomy, distribution, Hypselostomatidae, new synonym, new record

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Ключевые слова: Восточная Азия, Юго-Восточная Азия, наземные брюхоногие моллюски, таксономия, распространение, Hypselostomatidae, новый синоним, новая находка

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Introduction

The hypselostomatid genus *Angustopila* Jochum, Slapnik et Páll-Gergely, 2014 contains the smallest known land snails (Páll-Gergely et al., 2015, 2022; Dumrongrojwattana et al., 2021). A recent revision of this genus revealed remarkable biodiversity in Southeast Asia, with over 50 species, and demonstrated that three species have wide distributional ranges spanning hundreds of kilometres (Páll-Gergely et al., 2023). The most widespread species is *A. elevata* (Thompson et Upatham, 1997), originally described from northern Thailand but occurring from southern Thailand through northern Laos and northern Vietnam to the Chinese Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. From the Shillong Plateau in the north-eastern Indian state of Meghalaya, a single species, *A. milium* (Benson, 1853), has been recorded (Das et al., 2021; Páll-Gergely et al., 2023).

In the latest revision (Páll-Gergely et al., 2023), the only available shell of *A. milium* could not be examined adequately. However, recently collected additional shells of *A. milium* near the type locality have enabled us to conclude that *A. milium* and *A. elevata* do not differ in any significant morphological characters and should therefore be regarded as conspecific. Thus, according to current understanding, *A. milium* is one of the most widespread land snails in South and South-east Asia.

Material and methods

Sampling was conducted during field surveys in December 2022 at two caves in Meghalaya, northeast India. The shells were manually cleaned with wet, finely tapered brushes to remove sediment and examined without coating under a low-vacuum SEM (Hitachi TM-4000 Plus) at the Research and Instrument Core Facility of the Faculty of Science, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary. Shell measurements were obtained using ImageJ software (version 1.8.0_112).

Abbreviations used for collection depositories: ATREE – Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, Bangalore, India; HA – collection of András Hunyadi, Budapest, Hungary; HNHM – Hungarian Natural History Museum, Budapest, Hungary; UMZC – University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge, United Kingdom.

Abbreviations used for morphological structures: AH – aperture height; AW – aperture width; SH – shell height; SW – shell width.

Results

Class **Gastropoda**

Subclass **Heterobranchia**

Order **Stylommatophora**

Family **Hypselostomatidae**

Remark. Bouchet et al. (2017) treated Hypselostomatidae as a synonym of Gastrocoptidae Pilsbry, 1918, noting that the relationship between these groups remains unresolved. In accordance with recent studies (e.g., Páll-Gergely et al., 2015, 2020, 2022; Páll-Gergely & Hunyadi, 2022), we maintain Hypselostomatidae as a distinct family and classify *Angustopila* and related genera within it.

Genus ***Angustopila*** Jochum, Slapnik et Páll-Gergely, 2014

Angustopila milium (Benson, 1853)
(Figs 1–5)

Cyclostoma milium Benson, 1853: 285.

Hydrocena milium (Benson, 1853): Blanford, 1864: 464; Godwin-Austen, 1872: 515, pl. 30, fig. 3.

Cyathopoma milium (Benson, 1853): Blanford, 1869: 178.

Georissa milium (Benson, 1853): Pfeiffer, 1876: 292.

Acmella milium (Benson, 1853): Gude, 1921: 362; Ramakrishna et al., 2010: 111.

Angustopila milium (Benson, 1853): Das et al., 2021: 329; Preece et al., 2022: 154, fig. 70A; Páll-Gergely et al., 2023: 35, fig. 18.

Systemostoma elevata Thompson & Upatham, 1997: 232–233, figs 39–43; Panha & Burch, 2008: 120, fig. 103, **syn. nov.**

Angustopila elevata (Thompson et Upatham, 1997): Jochum et al., 2014: 27.; Páll-Gergely et al., 2015: 33, fig. 11C; Páll-Gergely et al., 2023: figs 12, 13, Supplementary material 3, figs S1–S6.

Angustopila subelevata Páll-Gergely et al., 2015: 39, fig. 4; Páll-Gergely et al., 2017: 332, figs 1B, 2A–G, 7E, F. Synonymised by Tongkerd et al., 2024: 167.

Type material. *Syntypes* of *Cyclostoma milium*: **INDIA, Meghalaya State**, Cherrapunji, “... in muscis aborum ad Musmai, prope Cherra-poonjee” [25°14.664'N, 91°43.448'E], 1 specimen (not located); without locality data, “*Hydrocena milium* Bs., original shell described”, from R. McAndrew collection (UMZC I.103805), 1 specimen (examined).

Additional material examined. **INDIA, Meghalaya State:** Krem Puri Cave, 25°16.667'N, 91°33.520'E, 28.XII.2022, N.K. Das leg., 5 shells (ATREE); Mawjymbuin Cave, 25°18.279'N, 91°35.101'E, 28.XII.2022, N.K. Das & D.J. Das leg., 1 shell (ATREE). **NEPAL, Gandaki Prov.:** Tanahun Distr., Bimalnagar, Siddha Gufa, vicinity of cave, 660 m a.s.l., 27°56.909'N, 84°25.109'E, 30.IX.2024, A. Hunyadi leg., 10 complete, 7 juvenile or broken shells (HA); Kaski Distr.: Batulechaur, Mahendra Cave, 995 m a.s.l., 28°16.323'N, 83°58.727'E, 3.X.2024, A. Hunyadi leg., 54 complete, 22 juvenile shells (HA); Chamere Gufa (Bat Cave), 1,185 m a.s.l., 28°16.052'N, 83°58.547'E, 3.X.2024, A. Hunyadi leg., 6 complete, 4 juvenile shells (HA); E of Nayapul, Shital Gufa, vicinity of cave, 1,190 m a.s.l., 28°17.699'N, 83°46.731'E, 2.X.2024, A. Hunyadi leg., 6 shells (HA).

Description of new material. Shell up to 1.11 mm, conical or slightly concave-conical, consisting of three and half to four whorls. Sculpture with fine spiral striae and equally prominent, irregular radial growth line. Aperture without barriers, rather subquadrate, with expanded, not reflected peristome. Umbilicus approximately one-sixth of shell width.

Measurements (in mm). Specimen 1 from Krem Puri Cave: SH 0.93, SW 0.83, AH 0.39, AW 0.37; specimen 2 from Krem Puri Cave: SH ca. 0.9 mm (damaged shell), SW 0.87, AH 0.42, AW 0.37; specimen from Mawjymbuin Cave: SH 1.01, SW 0.87, AH 0.39, AW 0.37. Syntype (UMZC I.103805): SH 1.11 (measured by R. Preece in June 2023 using a Dino-Lite digital microscope).

Habitat. Little is known about the ecology of *A. milium* and its habitat preferences. Panha &

Burch (2008) found that this species is not associated with caves but rather occurs among giant karst boulders surrounded by talus. The collection site at Doi Chiang Dao Mountain, Chiang Mai Province, Thailand, where *A. elevata*, **syn. nov.** was found, was covered by thick, moist layers of leaf litter. Panha & Burch (2008) reported that the litter was collected at the base of limestone cliffs and in solution holes in the rock. Several populations found after Panha & Burch (2008) confirmed that these snails are not obligate cave dwellers, as most shells from subsequently discovered populations were found in soil samples collected at the base of limestone rocks (Páll-Gergely et al., 2023).

In Krem Puri Cave (Fig. 7A–D as Electronic supplementary material 1; see Addenda), shells were collected from dry cave walls approximately four to five metres from the entrance. Live individuals of *Georissa* Blanford, 1864 were also found near the cave entrance, along with *A. milium*, on wet, moss-covered rocky walls. The cave entrance is narrow, and anthropogenic disturbance is minimal, limited mainly to a small number of tourists during the peak season. No artificial lighting has been installed inside the cave. Discovered in 2016 by the Meghalaya Adventurers Association, the cave is currently recognised as the world’s longest sandstone cave. The cave entrance remains humid and supports the growth of moss and other vegetation, providing suitable microhabitat conditions for minute gastropods. Although Krem Puri is a sandstone cave and Mawjymbuin Cave (Fig. 7E–H as Electronic supplementary material 1; see Addenda) is a limestone cave, specimens from both localities were collected from the entrance or twilight zones, which share similar microclimatic conditions. At Krem Puri Cave, the immediate exterior and interior temperatures were 18.6 °C and 17.7 °C, respectively, with a relative humidity of 64% in both zones. Similarly, at Mawjymbuin Cave, the exterior and interior temperatures were 16.8 °C and 17.3 °C, respectively, while the relative humidity was 69% outside and 65% inside.

Although the newly collected shells were found inside caves, we cannot rule out the possibility that the snails lived outside the caves and that the empty shells were subsequently washed in. Both caves in Meghalaya are popular tourist destinations,

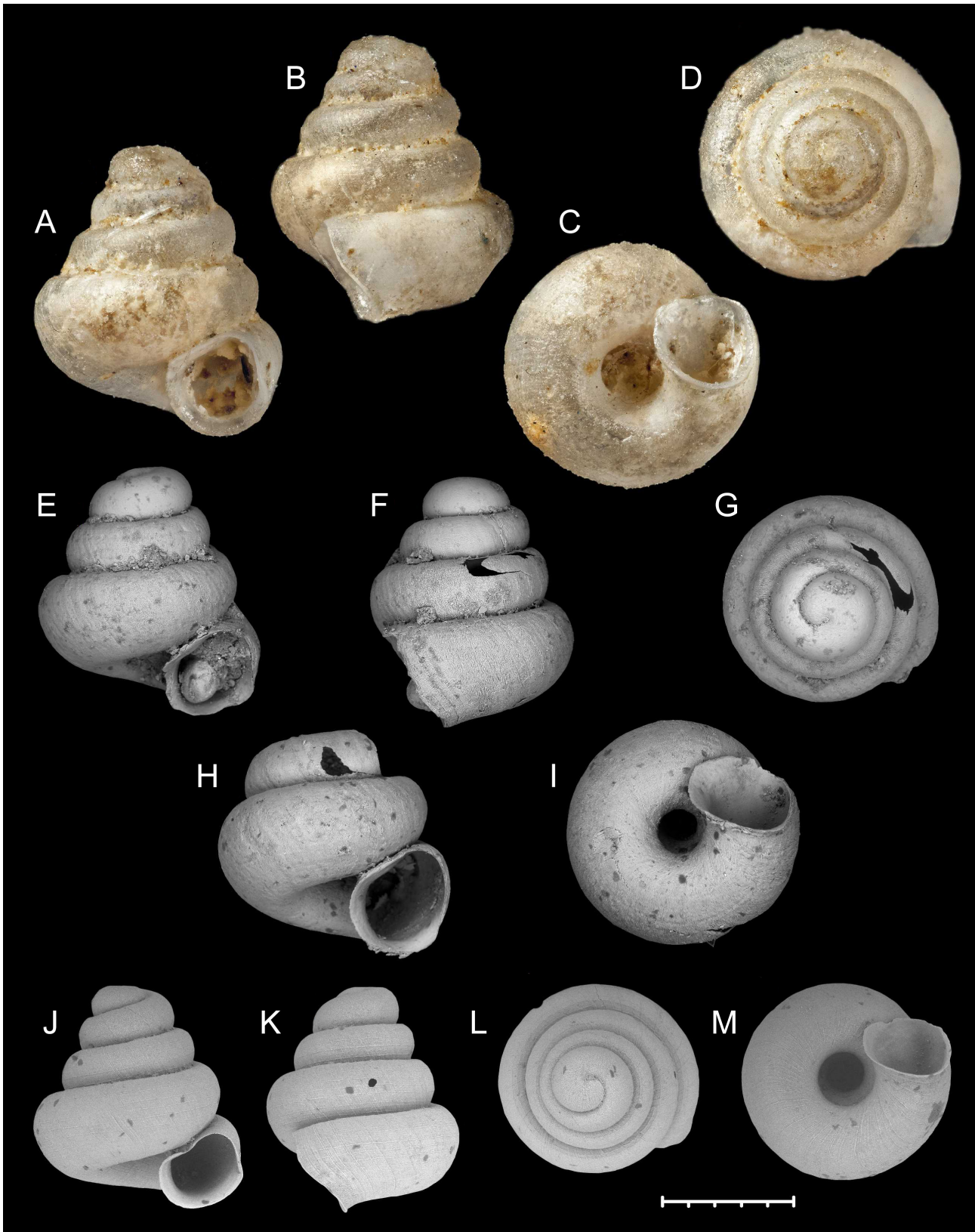


Fig. 1. *Angustopila milium* (Benson, 1853). **A–D**, syntype (UMZC I.103805); **E–G**, specimen 1 from Krem Puri Cave, India; **H–I**, specimen 2 from Krem Puri Cave, India; **J–M**, specimen from type locality of *A. elevata* (Thompson et Upatham, 1997), **syn. nov.** (HNHM 100184, from Páll-Gergely et al., 2023). Scale bar: 500 μm .

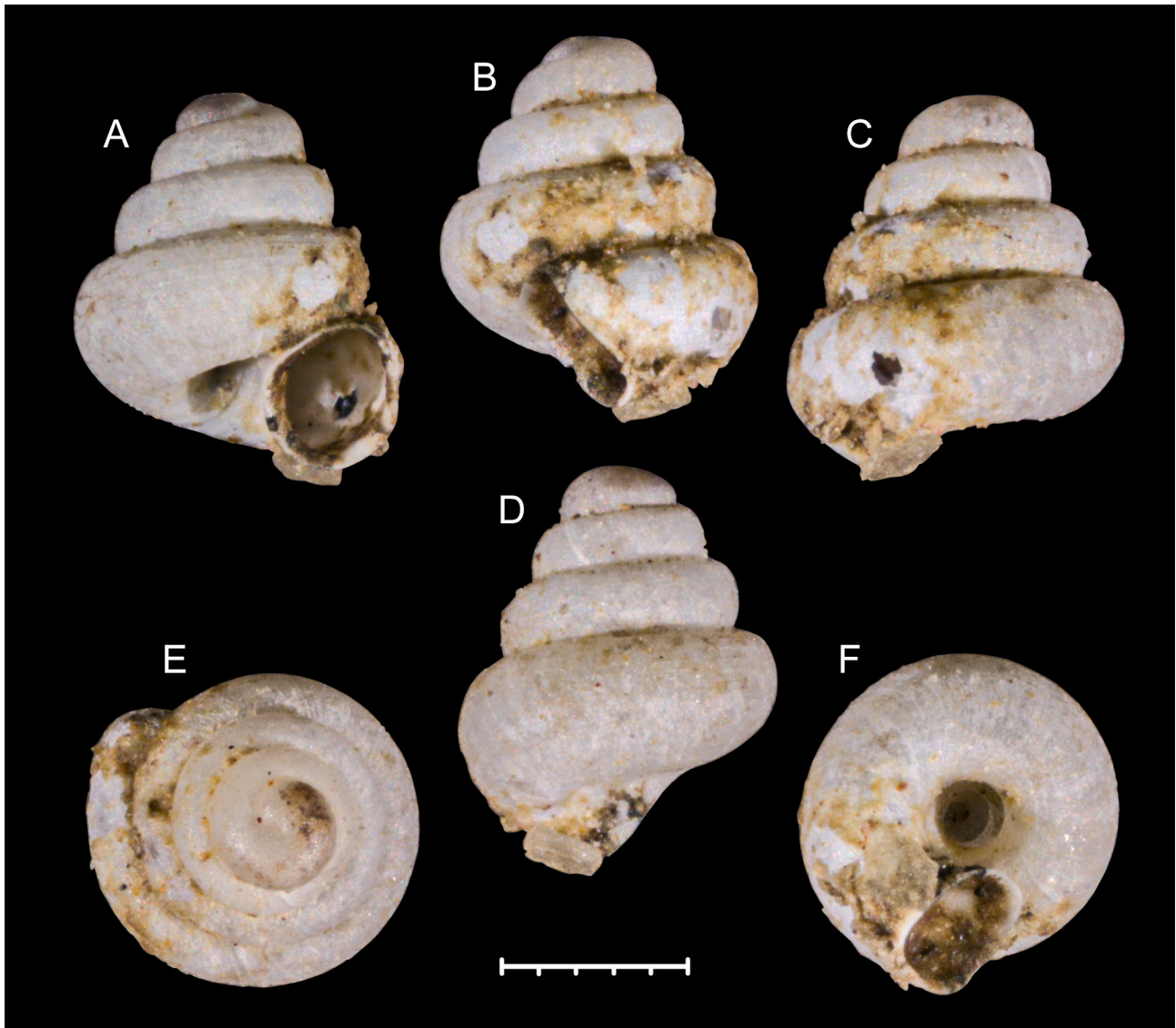


Fig. 2. *Angustopila milium* (Benson, 1853) from Mawjymbuin Cave, India. **A**, apertural view; **B**, right lateral view; **C**, adapertural view; **D**, left lateral view; **E**, dorsal view; **F**, umbilical (ventral) view. Scale bar: 0.5 mm.

attracting a large number of visitors during peak periods. The high footfall may pose a threat to both the external cave habitats and the potential subterranean habitats of this minute snail species.

Distribution. India, Nepal (new record), China, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam (Fig 6).

Remarks. Although the newly collected shells from India were so weathered that their superficial sculpture could not be examined, the syntype of *A. milium* exhibits the typical sculpture of the genus *Angustopila* (spiral striae). The shell sizes of both the newly collected Indian shells and the syntype of *A. milium* are larger than those of other

populations of *A. elevata*, *syn. nov.* although their size ranges overlap (SH 0.93–1.11 mm compared to 0.8–0.97 mm). Additionally, the umbilicus of one of the newly collected Indian shells (Fig. 1I) is narrower than that of most *A. elevata* shells; *some A. elevata* shells are known to have narrow umbilici (see, for example, supplementary fig. 6 in Páll-Gergely et al., 2023), while shell size shows considerable variability. The conical or slightly concave-conical shell shape and the toothless aperture visible in the newly collected Indian *A. milium* shells are also considered typical of *A. elevata* shells.

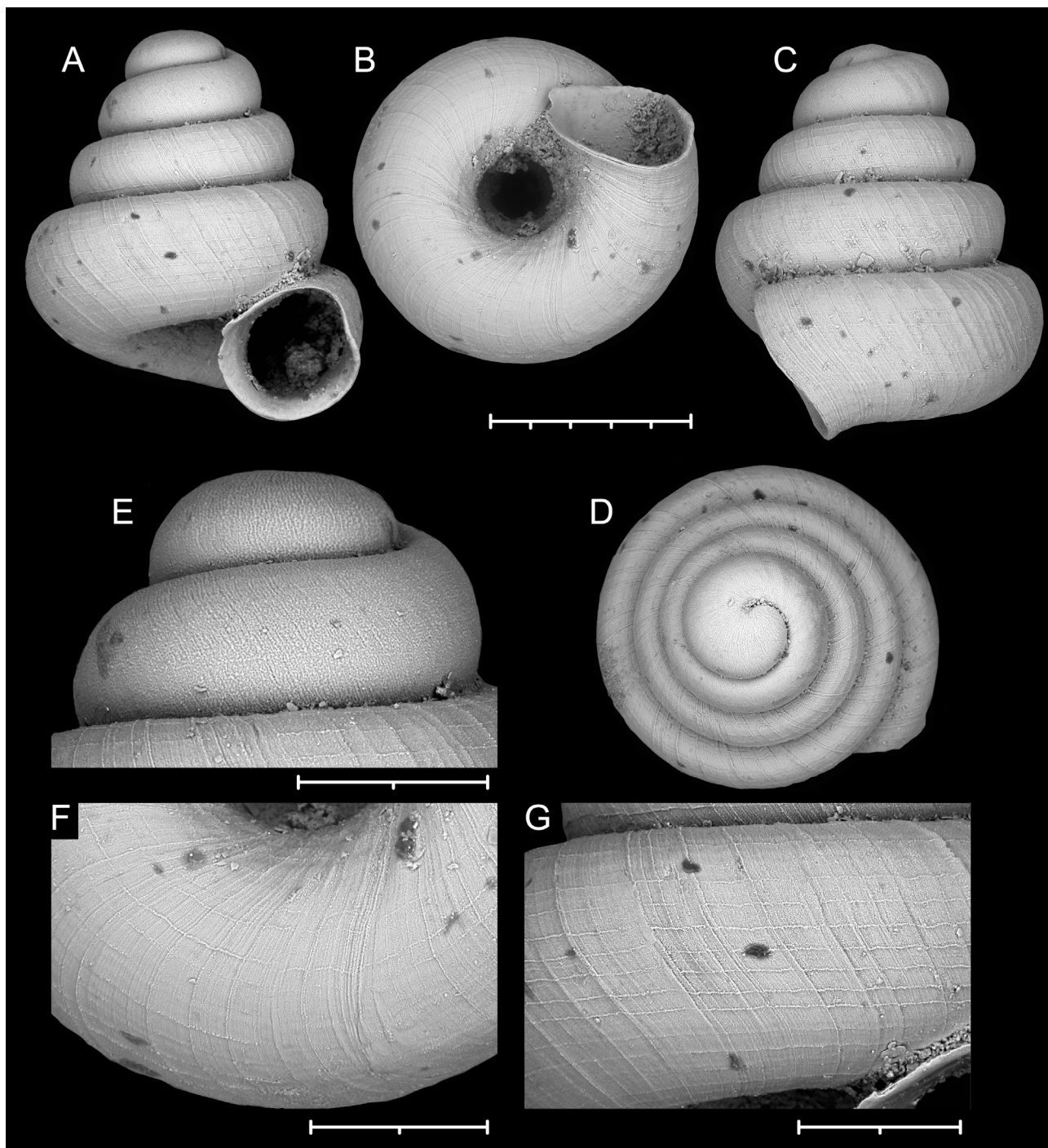


Fig. 3. *Angustopila milium* (Benson, 1853) from Siddha Gufa, Nepal, specimen 1. **A**, apertural view; **B**, umbilical (ventral) view; **C**, right lateral view; **D**, dorsal view; **E**, protoconch; **F**, sculpture of umbilical (ventral) view of last whorl; **G**, sculpture of last whorl. Scale bars: 500 µm (A–D), 200 µm (E–G).

The shells from Nepal fall within the morphological variability of *A. elevata* reported by Páll-Gergely et al. (2023). Among the ten adult shells from Siddha Gufa, two were broader and less elevated (Fig. 4). However, no other concho-

logical traits differed between these two shells and those with higher spires (Fig. 3). Furthermore, there was a continuous variation between the high-spired and extremely broad specimens. The other Nepalese samples comprised high-spired

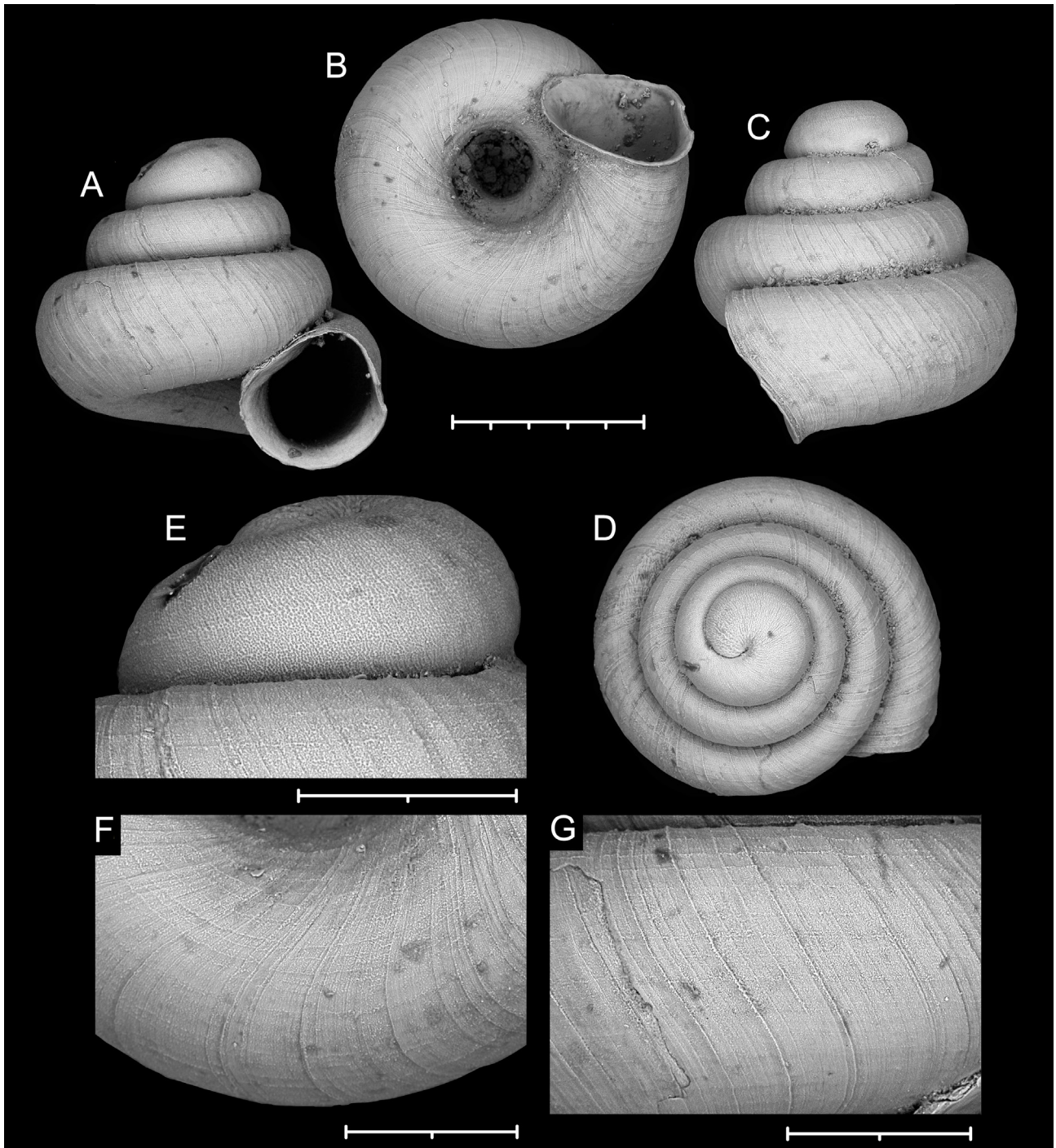


Fig 4. *Angustopila milium* (Benson, 1853) from Siddha Gufa, Nepal, specimen 2. **A**, apertural view; **B**, umbilical (ventral) view; **C**, right lateral view; **D**, dorsal view; **E**, protoconch; **F**, sculpture of umbilical (ventral) view of last whorl; **G**, sculpture of last whorl. Scale bars: 500 µm (A–D), 200 µm (E–G).

shells, similar to those of *A. elevata* from other parts of Southeast Asia.

As we found no conchological characters distinguishing *A. milium* from *A. elevata*, we consider the latter to be a junior synonym of *A. mi-*

lium. The distribution of *A. milium* extends from the Himalayas through the Indo-Burma region to the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Province of China and southern Thailand (Fig. 6), making this species one of the most widespread

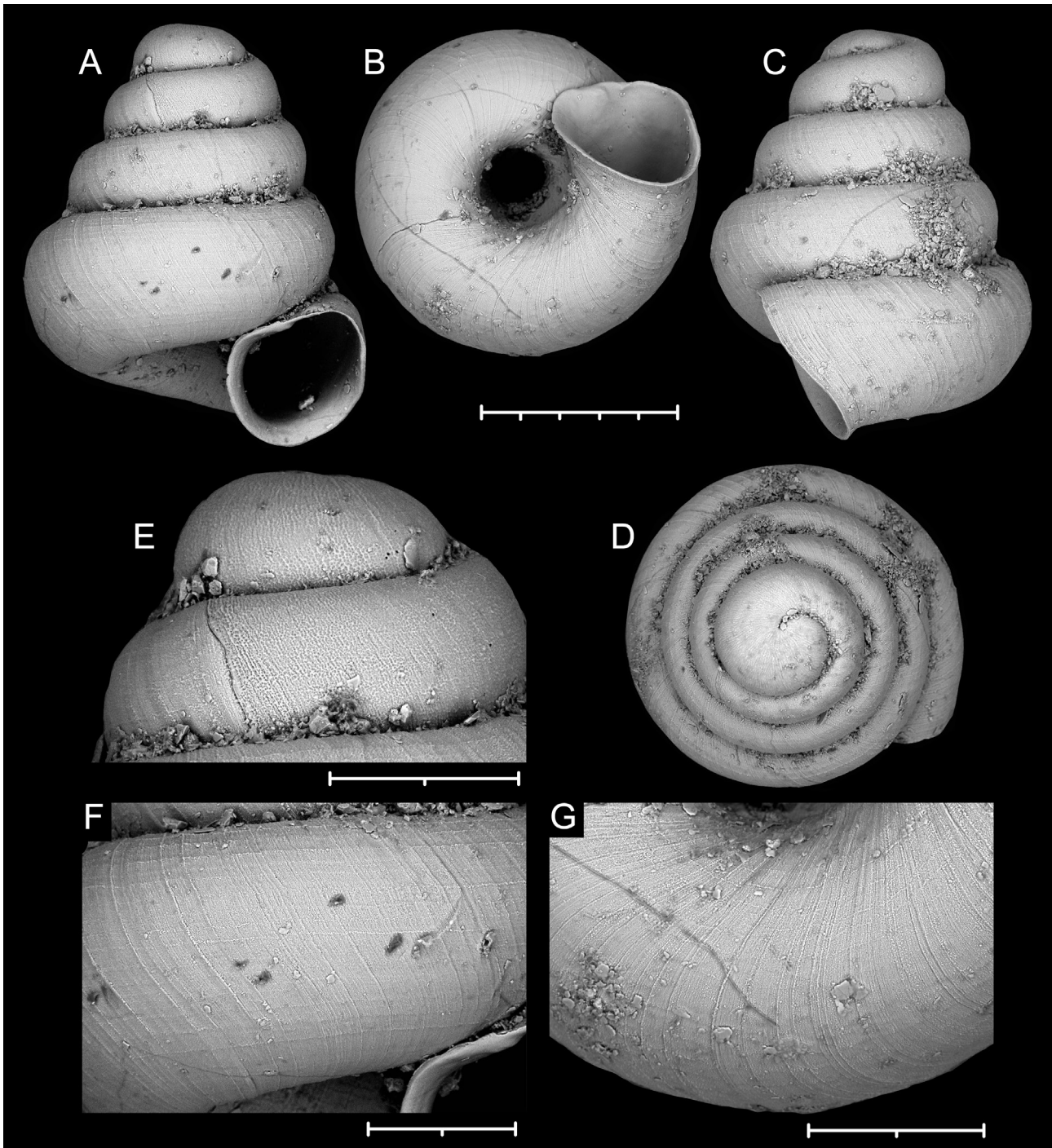


Fig. 5. *Angustopila milium* (Benson, 1853) from Mahendra Cave, Nepal, specimen 1. **A**, apertural view; **B**, umbilical (ventral) view; **C**, right lateral view; **D**, dorsal view; **E**, protoconch; **F**, sculpture of umbilical (ventral) view of last whorl; **G**, sculpture of last whorl. Scale bars: 500 µm (A–D), 200 µm (E–G).

South and Southeast Asian land snails. Given this broad distribution, combined with extensive mountain barriers, deep river gorges, diverse vegetation types, climatic gradients, and long-term geographic isolation among populations, it is

highly plausible that *A. milium* represents a species complex exhibiting conserved shell morphology. Resolving these cryptic lineages will require detailed anatomical studies as well as molecular investigations.

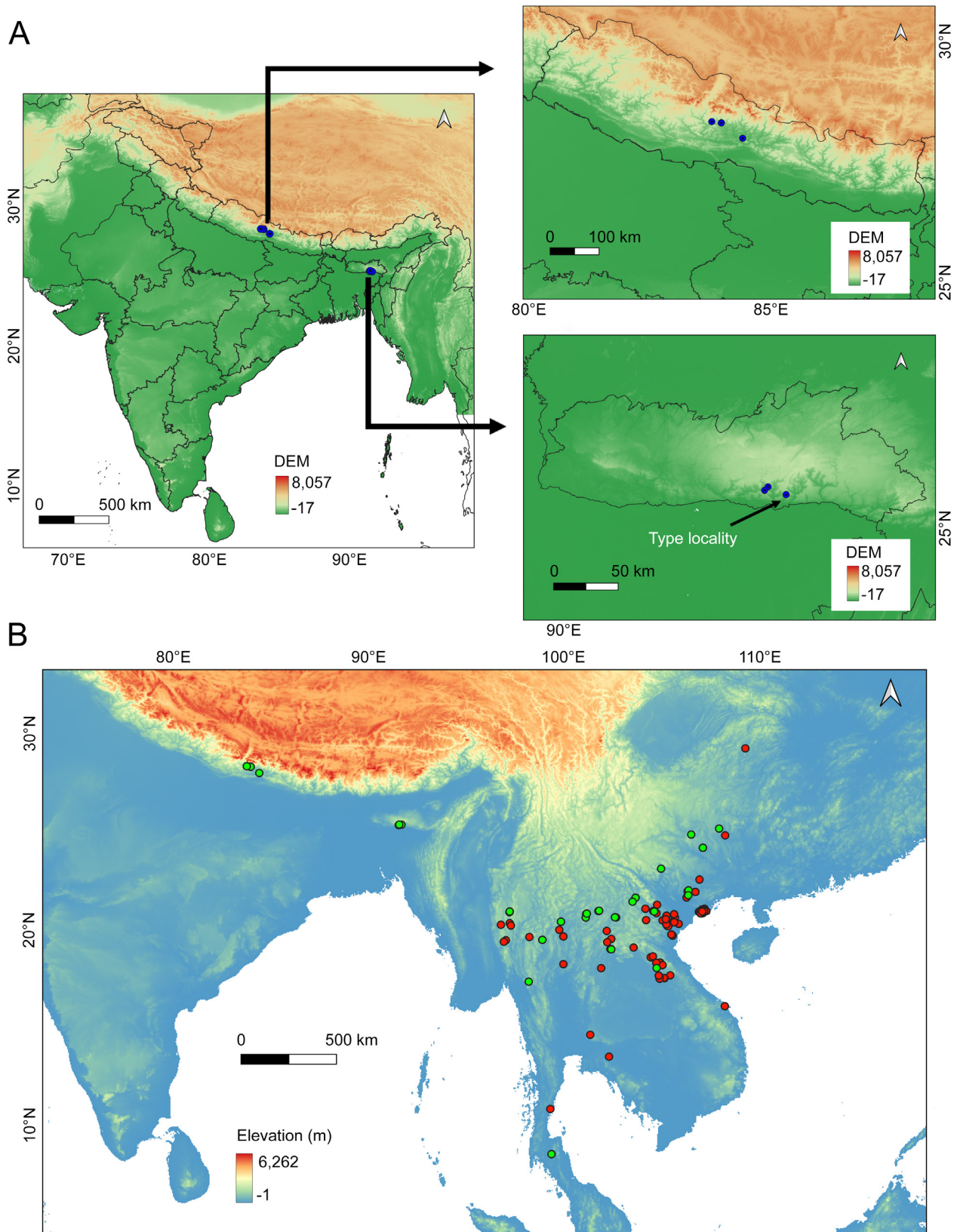


Fig. 6. Distribution of *Angustopila* species. **A**, localities of *A. milium* (Benson, 1853) reported herein from India and Nepal; **B**, distribution of *A. milium* (green circles) and all other species (red circles) of this genus (based on Páll-Gergely et al., 2023).

Addenda

Electronic supplementary material 1. Fig. 7. Krem Puri Cave (A–D) and Mawjymbuin Cave (E–H), India. **A**, pathway leading to cave entrance; **B**, cave entrance; **C**, shells of *Angustopila milium* (Benson, 1853) in cave sediment; **D**, Nipu Kumar Das collecting shells inside cave; **E**, entrance gate and signboard; **F**, stalagmite formation inside cave; **G**, exterior view of cave entrance with approach pathway; **H**, Nipu Kumar Das collecting shell specimens from cave wall. File format: JPEG. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.31610/zsr/2026.35.1.57>

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