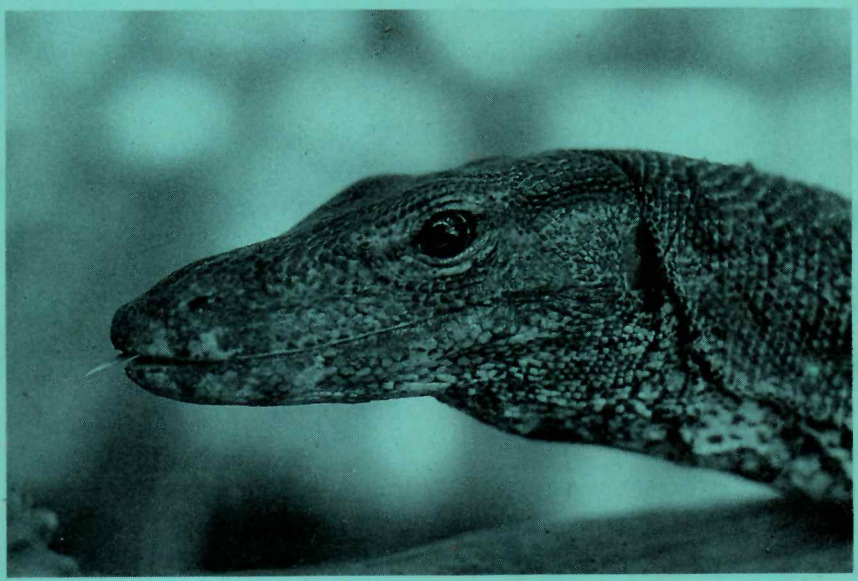
Cobra

Volume - 38 October - December 1999



CHENNAI SNAKE PARK TRUST

Quarterly Newsletter of the Chennai Snake Park Trust

Cover

Water Monitor Lizard *(Varanus salvator)*

The largest monitor lizard in India, growing to over 2.5m. Occurs locally in the estuaries of Orissa, West Bengal and in the Andaman-Nicobar islands. Endangered.

Photo : **M.V. Ravikumar**

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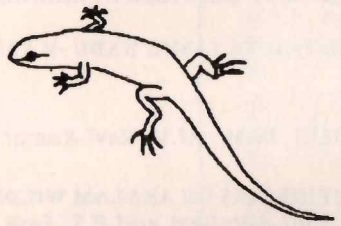
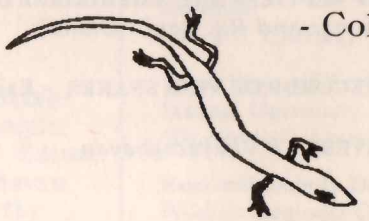


" All knowledge begins and ends with wonder; but the first wonder is the child of ignorance; the second wonder is the parent of adoration"

- Coleridge.



DISTRIBUTION AND STATUS OF REPTILES IN CHENNAI, KANCHIPURAM AND THIRUVELLORE DISTRICTS, TAMIL NADU.

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Chennai, Kanchipuram and Thiruvellore districts are located in the north-eastern parts of Tamilnadu. Though these districts are treated as three different revenue districts, geographically they are one since the physcial features are the same. These areas can be generally demarcated into three distinct zones namely Eastern ghats, coastal plains and inland plains. The forest types of these tracts are tropical dry evergreen in the inland plains and tropical dry deciduous in the Eastern ghats. The reserved forests of those districts cover an area of 520 sq.km i.e.6.5% of the total geographical area. However, forests in these tracts are very patchy in nature and surrounded by agricultural fields.

The study was undertaken during the year 1990-1992 in order to ascertain the reptilian assemblage of scrub jungle forests. Apart from this, rcent observations have been used in the preparation of this paper.

Order/ Sub order	Family	Species	Remarks
Testudines	Bataguridae	*Melanochelys trijuga*	The common pond turtle is frequently seen in streams and tanks.
	Testudunidae	*Geochelone elegans*	A common tortoise recorded in arid zones of the forest areas.
	Trionychidae	*Lissemys punctata*	The common flapshell is recorded in all tanks and streams in the districts.
Squamata Sauria	Gekkonidae	*Hemidactylus frenatus*	This small house gecko is recorded in human habitations.
		Hemidactylus brooki	This small gecko is distributed all over the districts.
		Hemidactylus leschenaulti	The large tree gecko is very common on tree bark and common in houses of Chennai.
		Hemidactylus triedrus	This gecko is seen under stone piles all over the tract.
		Hemidactylus maculatus	A large gecko found in the rocky crevices.
	Agamidae	*Calotes versicolor*	The common garden lizard is distributed in all three districts.
		Sitana ponticeriana	Common in the drier plains.

		Psammophilus blanfordanus	This redheaded rock lizard is commonly seen in the hills.
	Chameleonidae	*Chamaeleo zeylanicus*	Common in the wooded forests.
	Scincidae	*Mabuya carinata*	This is the common skink of this area.
		Mabuya trivittata	The large bronze skink is common.
		Riopa punctata	The red tailed common skink is distributed throughout the districts.
	Varanidae	*Varanus bengalensis*	The common monitor lizard is known from all three districts.
Squamata Serpentes	Typhlopidae	*Ramphotyphlops braminus*	Frequently seen in the rainy season.
	Boidae	*Eryx conicus*	Collected from the plains.
		Eryx johni	Common in the drier plains.
	Colubridae	*Ptyas mucosus*	This is a common snake all over the districts.
		Elaphe helena	This snake is recorded in the drier and rocky terrain.
		Oligodon arnensis	The kukri snake lives under tiles and bricks around human habitation.
		Oligodon taeniolatus	Lives under tiles and bricks around human habitation.

	Lycodon aulicus	The common wolf snake lives under tiles and bricks around human habitation
	Dendrelaphis tristis	Common throughout the districts.
	Ahaetulla nasutus	Common in this tract.
	Boiga trigonata	Rarely seen in the drier parts.
	Xenochrophis piscator	The common water snake is found in the tanks and streams.
	Atretium	Seen in stagnant water bodies.
	schistosum	in plains .
	Amphiesma stolata	Common in the plains including the city of Chennai
Elapidae	*Bungarus caeruleus*	Recorded from the plains.
	Callophis melanurus	Only a few specimens recorded in the Guindy National Park, Chennai.
	Naja naja	The common cobra is frequently encountered.
Viperidae	*Daboia russelli*	Recorded from the drier and rocky hills.
	Echis carinatus	Frequently seen in the drier parts of these districts.

The reptilian fauna in the scrub jungle forests of Chennai, Kanchipurum and Thiruvellore districts are comprised of 2 orders, 16 families, 28 genera and 35 species. Three families of turtles and tortoises are represented, each by one species. The lizards primarily belong to five species of geckonidae. Out of 19 species of snakes, eleven species belong to the family colubridae and the other 8 species belong to four families.

In the present study, three species beloning to two genera of turtles, one species of tortoise, 13 species of lizards and 19 species of snakes were recorded. This list does not include Hydrophids and the estuarine snake *Cerberus rhynchops*. Murthy (1977) recorded from the vicinity of Madras city, two species of turtles, one species of tortoise, 16 species of lizards and 23 species of snakes. All those species of turtles and tortoise recorded by him have been recorded in the present study also. In the case of lizards, *Dravidogecko anamallensis, Lopholopis scabriceps, Mabuya bibroni, M. macularia* and *Ophisops jerodoni* which were listed earlier by Murthy were not recorded presently. However, two species of lizards *Hemidactylus maculatus* and *Psammophilus blanfordanus* recorded presently in the Rajampalayam reserve forests were not recorded by him earlier. In the case of snakes, *Typhlops psammeces, Python molurus, Lycodon striatus* and *Dryocalamus nympha*, which were described earlier could not be recorded presently.

Acknowledgement

Authors are highly indebted to the Chennai Snake Park Trust for funding this research work.

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REPTILES OF KESARKULLI DAM

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Kesarkulli Dam is situated in Pennagaram Taluk of Dharmapuri district. It falls within the Palacode range, situated about 19km away from Palacode near Balrampatti village. Kesarkulli Dam and the nearby villages are adjacent to the elephant ridden forests of Denkannikotta and have the repute of being frequented by some of our notorious sandal wood smugglers.

This Dam is surrounded by villages and dry forest. The forest is dominated by thorns *(Acacia)* and low statured deciduous trees. The terrain is rocky. A traditional form of dryland agriculture is generally practised. Use of commercially available pesticides is scarce. At our Foundation with the financial aid of the Royal Netherlands Embassy, New Delhi, this village was chosen to identify and train young people in the conservation of agrobiodiversity of traditional crops and cropping practices which while being adequately productive are eco-friendly.

During my visit from January 1999 to September 1999 to this Dam, the surrounding villages and forests I had made an attempt to list the reptiles, which were available in this area with the help of local volunteers.

Checklist of reptiles

Family : Gekkonidae

1. Common House Gecko *(Hemidactylus frenatus)*
   Material : 13 examples
   Remarks: Sighted frequently in the evening hours near the human habitation, school and the temple

Family : Agamidae

2. Common Garden Lizard *(Calotes versicolor)*
   Material : 42 examples

   Remarks : Very common, All sightings were on the roadside, on the *Lantana* bushes throughout the study area.

3. Rock Lizard *(Psammophilus blanfordanus)*
   Material : 5 examples
   Remarks : Sighted in the plain areas mostly in the rock crevices and underneath the stones.

4. Fan-throated Lizard *(Sitana ponticeriana)*
   Material : 21 examples
   Remarks : This small agamid was seen throughout the study area.

Family : Chameleonidae

5. Indian Chameleon *(Chamaeleo zeylanicus)*
   Material : 2 examples
   Remarks : One juvenile and an adult were sighted on an *Acacia* tree (at height of 3 m) on the branches, on two different days.

Family : Scinidae

6. Common Skink *(Mabuya carinata)*
   Material : 8 examples
   Remark : This is the common skink of this area. All individuals were sighted inhabiting the leaf litter and under small shrubs.

7. Snake Skink *(Riopa punctata)*
   Material : 6 examples
   Remarks : Juvenile (red tailed) skinks were frequently sighted near the forest patches in the rocky areas, sometimes crossing the road and entering the dried leaf litter.

Family : Lacertidae

8. Jerdon's Snake-eye *(Ophisops jerdoni)*
   Material : One example
   Remarks : Only one sighted while crossing the mud road, it entered the *Lantana* bush.

Family : Varanidae

9. Common Indian Monitor *(Varanus bengalensis)*
Material : 2 examples
Remarks : First sighted on the bund of a paddy field 150 m away from the dam on the way to Puddur village. The second sighting was near a stream at the foot hills of Erimalai.

Family : Boidae

10. Russell's Sand Boa *(Eryx conicus)*
Material : 6 examples
Remarks : Three were sighted near the heaps of sugarcane; one more found killed by the people. The fifth one was sighted while feeding on a garden lizard behind the school. The last was in a hole in the roots of a tamarind tree.

11. Red Sand Boa *(Eryx johni)*
Material : 2 examples
Remarks : One road kill. The second specimen was found near the government community well.

12. Indian Python *(Python molurus)*
Material : 1 example
Remarks : Moulted skin was collected on the hills at an altitude of 90 m under a rocky boulder surrounded by dense bushes, where a stream is flowing down to the foot hills.

Family : Colubridae

13. Dhaman or Rat Snake *(Ptyas mucosus)*
Material : 4 examples
Remarks : Three sighted on the bunds of paddy fields and one on top of dried paddy hay in the mid afternoon.

14. Bronzeback Tree Snake *(Dendrelaphis tristis)*
Material : 2 examples
Remarks : A fast-moving arboreal snake. Both the sightings were on date palms at two different areas.

15. Green Vine Snake *(Ahaetulla nasutus)*
Material : One example
Remarks : An arboreal snake usually found on trees, but this specimen was sighted on the ground where the harvested crops were dried. It was attacked and killed by 4 crows.

Family : Dipsadidae

16. Common Kukri Snake *(Oligodon arnensis)*
Material : One example
Remarks : A nocturnal species once sighted in the thatched roof of a cowshed.

Family : Elapidae

17. Common Krait *(Bungarus caeruleus)*
Material : One example
Remarks : A decayed specimen was collected from the cactus bushes, which was killed by the local youth about a week prior to the collection.

18. Indian Cobra *(Naja naja)*
Material : 3 examples
Remarks : Twice sighted in the late evening hours near the paddy fields. The third was a juvenile which was sighted in one of a disused pumpset shed of a well.

Family : Homalopsidae

19. Common Cat Snake *(Boiga trigonata)*
Material : One example
Remarks : An arboreal snake. A specimen measuring a total length of 410mm was observed on the bank of the Kesarkulli Dam.

Family : Natricidae

20. Checkered Keelback *(Xenochrophis piscator)*
Material : 9 examples
Remarks : All specimens were sighted near the bund of Kesarkulli dam except for three, of which 2 were sighted in the wells near

Seengadu village and the last in one of the wells which belongs to the village gounder of Karikuttanoor.

21. Olive Keelback *(Atretium schistosum)*
Material : One example
Remarks: Only one sighting near the dam in a small pond in the month of July.

22. Striped Keelback *(Amphiesma stolata)*
Material : One example
Remarks : Common in cultivated areas, and ponds and streams.

Family : Typhlopidae

23. Worm or Blind Snake *(Typhlina bramina)*
Material : One example
Remarks : A specimen which was killed and by a group of small children.

Family : Viperidae

24. Russell's Viper *(Daboia russelli)*
Material : One example
Remarks : Located by the hissing sound (but not seen) in a granite heap pile near a cowshed at 20.00 hours confirmed by the local people's description of the snake.

25. Saw-scaled Viper *(Echis carinatus)*
Material : One example
Remarks : Sighted once near the foot hills of Erimalai on a dead log of *Acacia* tree.

26. Pit Viper *(Trimeresurus sp)*
Remarks : Reported by the local people.

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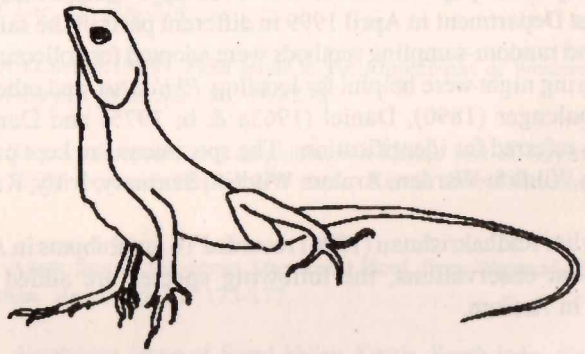

ADDITIONS TO THE AMPHIBIANS OF ARALAM WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, KERALA

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Aralam wildlife Sanctuary located between 11° 49' and 11° 50' N lat. and 75° 49' and 75° 57' E long. forms a part of the chunk of reserve forests covering the States of Karnataka and Kerala. It is about 55 square km in extent. Tropical wet evergreen forest dominates the vegetation and patches of semi-evergreen forests with bamboo thickets are also distributed over the area. Aralam is one of the least studied areas for its floristic and faunistic richness.

The present paper is based on a seven days' field work, funded by the Kerala Forest Department in April 1999 in different parts of the sanctuary. Visual encounter and random-sampling methods were adopted for collecting amphibians. The calls during night were helpful for locating *Philautus* and other Rhacophorid species. Boulenger (1890), Daniel (1963a & b; 1975) and Daniel and Sekar (1989) were referred for identification. The specimens are kept preserved in the Office of the Wildlife Warden, Aralam Wildlife Santuary, Iritty, Kannur District.

Earlier Radhakrishnan (1996) recorded 16 amphibians in Aralam. Based on the present observations, the following species are added to the list of amphibians in Aralam.

1. *Hoplobatrachus tigerinus* (Daudin)
2. *Micrixalus nudis* Pillai
3. *Rana curtipes* Jerdon
4. *Philautus pulcherrimus* (Ahl)
5. *Rhacophorus malabaricus* Jerdon

Of these, *Micrixalus nudis, Rana curtipes, Philautus pulcherrimus* and *Rhacophorus malabaricus* are endemic to the Western Ghats (Swengel,1990 & 1993). *Rana curtipes, P. pulcherrimus* and *Rhacophorus malabaricus* were

common. Pillai (1978) described *Micrixalus nudis* from Kurichiat, Wayanad. Later this was reported from Silent Valley (Pillai, 1986) and Nilambur (Easa,1998). The present observation extends its range in the Western Ghats. Considering the report of Radhakrishnan (1996), a total of 21 species of amphibians are observed in Aralam Wildlife Santuary.

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REPTILIAN AND AMPHIBIAN FAUNA OF SAJJANGARH WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, UDAIPUR, RAJASTHAN

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Maharana Sajjan Singh (1874-84) ruler of Mewar, constructed a beautiful palace over a hill on the west side of Udaipur city. The palace was named Sajjangarh. In the name of the palace, the surrounding forest block was notified as Sajjangarh Forest Block and the name of the sanctuary was also given as Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary.

The Sanctuary is nearly 5 km away from Udaipur city in the western side. It is situated between 73° 37' and 73° 40' E longitude and between 24° 35' and 24° 39' N latitude. The area is occupied by rocks of the Aravlli system. The tract is hilly and altitude varies from 630 to 938m above MSL. The forests present here are of the dry tropical type. Average annual rainfall is 650mm. The temperature varies widely from 4°C to 42° C.

It is a small sanctuary covering an area nearly 5.14 sq.km. With the help of local authorities many surveys were made from 1992 to 1998 in the sanctuary to learn about its reptilian and amphibian residents. A systematic account of them is given below in Table - 1.

Table. 1: List of reptiles and amphibians in Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary.

Family	Name of species	Local name	Habitat	Status
Testudinidae	*Geochelone elegans*	*Bhumi kachua*	Foot-hills	VR
Geckkonidae	*Hemidactylus flaviviridis*	*Bashumra*	Range office, Palace	C
	Hemidactylus brooki	*Bashumra*	Tree trunks, Dry stone walls	C
	Hemidactylus triedrus	-	Seen once in a deserted room of Palace	NK
	Eublepharis macularius	-	Under stones	R
Agamidae	*Calotes versicolor*	*Kangatia*	Tree trunks	R
	Sitana ponticeriana	-	Open ground	R
Chamaeleonidae	*Chamaeleo zeylanicus*	*Halanviya*	Arboreal	R
Scincidae	*Mabuya carinata*	*Nagarbammi*	Under pieces of rocks and bricks, forests	C
	Mabuya macularia	"	"	C
	Riopa punctata	"	Grassy area of foot zone	VC
	Ophisops jerdoni	"	Rocky upper reaches	C

Family	Name of species	Local name	Habitat	Status
Varanidae	*Varanus bengalensis*	*Goyara*	All habitats	VC
Typhlopidae	*Typhlina bramina*	*Andha samp*	Moist and shady areas	R
	Typhlina acutus	,,	,,	R
Boidae	*Python molurus*	*Agar, Ajgar*	Seen once in	VR
	Eryx conicus	,,	Plain and rocky areas	C
	E. johni	*Dumbi Dhanrai*	Plain area	R
Dispadidae	*Lycodon aulicus*	-	All habitats	C
	L. striatus	-	Under stones	R
	Oligodon taeniolatus	-	Under stones	R
	O. arnensis	-	Under stones Dry stone wall	R
Natricidae	*Amphiesma stolata*	-	Riverine	R
	Macropisthodon plumbicolor	*Leela Samp*	Rocky zone	VR
	Xenochrophis piscator	*Dindu*	Riverine, Anicuts	C

Family	Name of species	Local name	Habitat	Status
Colubridae	*Elaphe helena*	-	Low bushy area	C
	Ptyas mucosus	—	Plain area	R
	Dendrelaphis tristis	*Udni*	Arboreal	R
Homalopsidae	*Boiga trigonata*	-	Bushy zone	C
Elapidae	*Bungarus caeruleus*	-	Plains	R
	Naja naja	*Nagin*	All habitats	C
Viperidae	*Daboia russelli*	*Chitti*	Open grassy area	VR
	Echis carinatus	*Kankriwala*	Open rocky/ stony area	C
AMPHIBIANS				
Ranidae	*Limnonectes tigerina*	*Dedka*	Anicuts	C
	L. limnocharis	,,	Damp and cool places	C
	Occidozyga cyanophlyctis	,,	Anicuts	VC
	Tomopterna breviceps	,,	Damp and cool places, riverine	C
Bufonidae	*Bufo melanostictus*	,,	Foot hills	C
Microhylidae	*Microhyla ornata*	,,	Damp, cool grassy areas, near small rain water pools	C
	Uperodon systoma	,,	Foot hill, plains	VR

C= Common, VC=Very common, R=Rare, VR= Very rare, NK=Not known.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to Sh.O.C.Chandel, Dy.CWLW and Sh.Dalpat Singh Rajpurohit, Range Forest Officer for providing facilities during the survey.

ROLE OF THE "FRIENDS OF SNAKES SOCIETY" IN THE CONSERVATION OF SNAKES

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Enchanted by snakes and drawing inspiration from Romulus Whitaker's book on Indian snakes, Rajkumar Kanuri started catching snakes at the age of eight. He shocked his mother when she found a live snake in his tiffin box. However, his mother encouraged him to develop this hobby. Later, he went on to Pune and had training under the Director of the Pune Snake Park, Mr. Neelam Kumar Khaire.

M.V. Ravikumar, of Sainikpuri emulated Rajkumar's example and became a part of his endeavor. The efforts of Rajkumar Kanuri and Ravi Kumar led to the formation of the 'Friends of Snake Club'. The Friends pf Snake club formed in 1993 has more than 16 members. Mrs. Amala Akkinneni is the president and Shri. T. Ramakrishna, Chief Wildlife Warden, A.P. Forest Dept. is the vice president of the Soceity. The Society has a governing body of eight members. The members of the club give demonstrations at schools and colleges in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secundrabad.

The club functions with meagre resources Mr. R.K. Rao IFS (retired) and Director WWF Andhra Pradesh have extended help in procuring funds from WWF and have given us invaluable guidence and encouragement.

Recognising our dedication and devotion, Andhra Pradesh Forest Department's, Chief Conservator of Forest Mr. T.Ramakrishna, Conservator of Forest Mr. A.V. Joseph and the Curator(Nehru Zoological Park of Hyderabad) Mr. K.N. Banerjee have helped the Friends of Snakes Club with advice, guidence and required permission for keeping snakes to study their behavioral pattern and release them back in the protected areas. We were also given permission to give demonstrations of snakes every Sunday for the crowd at the reptile sanatorium demonstration pit in the zoo premises. We now have 20 species of Indian snakes with us.

During the year 1995, Mrs. Amala Akkinneni, Secretary Blue Cross of Hyderabad, guided us to organise ourselves as a registered society and helped us with funds and an immense amount of moral support. The club was registered under the Societies Act and is now known as the Friends of Snake Society (FoSS).

Mrs. Maneka Gandhi, Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment has recently recognised our endeavors towards the conservation of snakes and has given a very great incentive by providing us with a vehicle for our rescue activities. She has also requested the State Government to provide the FoSS with some land, where a Snake Conservation Centre can be set up in the State and promised to provide financial assistance for infrastructure to the Centre.

One other person to be mentioned here is Mr. Ugramraj Nahar, Managing Director, Nahar Finance Limited who has extended financial support in times of need.

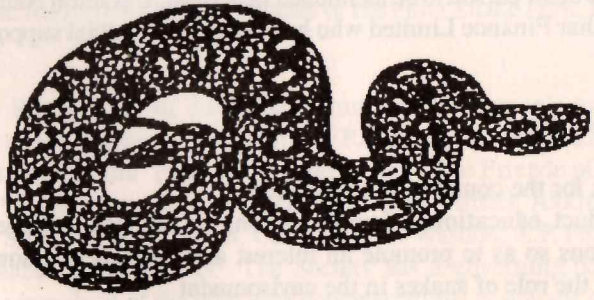
Aims of the Society

- To work for the conservation of snakes.
- To conduct educational demonstrations in schools, colleges and other institutions so as to promote an interest and awareness among the public towards the role of snakes in the environment.

- To educate people in rural areas about snakes, remove the misconceptions and explain the importance of snakes in natural rodent control, giving guidence for preven tion and treatment of snake bite.
- To set up an Education and Conservation Centre having the various species of snakes found in India.
- To conduct research and studies related to various aspects (behavioral, distributional, taxonomical, etc.) of Indian snakes.
- To try and look out for alternative sources of income for professional snake catchers so as to help curb snakeskin trade and stop roadside shows which give people only wrong information about snakes.
- To help research laboratories engaged in the development of life-saving drugs from snake-venom at the same time ensuring the welfare of the snakes.

Achievements of this Society from 1995 - 1998

- The Society has rescued more than 1600 snakes from in an around the twin cities of Secundrabad and Hyderabad.
- About 260 demonstrations have been conducted in various schools, colleges and other institutions and in the rural areas of Secundrabad, Hyderabad and Rangareddy District.



CHECKLIST OF REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS OF KOLLI HILLS

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The following is the updated list of reptiles and amphibians of Kolli Hills. The first list was published in 1998 (Daniels and Ravi kumar, 1998).

S.No	Reptiles	Common Name
1	*Mabuya macularia*	Little skink
2	*Mabuya carinata*	Common skink
3	*Riopa punctata*	Snake skink
4	*Psammophilus dorsalis*	Peninsular rock agama
5	*Calotes calotes*	Green lizard
6	*Calotes versicolor*	Common garden lizard
7	*Draco dussumieri*	Flying lizard
8	*Hemidactylus leschenaulti*	Bark gecko
9	*Hemidactylus brooki*	Brook's gecko
10	*Hemidactylus frenatus*	Southern house gecko
11	*Hemiphyllodactylus typus*	———
12	*Cnemaspis sp*	Dwarf gecko
13	*Chamaeleo zeylanicus*	Indian chameleon
14	*Varanus bengalensis*	Common monitor
15	*Typhlina bramina*	Common worm snake
16	*Typhlina acutus*	Beaked worm snake
17	*Eryx conicus*	Russell's sand boa
18	*Eryx johni*	Red sand boa
19	*Dendrelaphis tristis*	Bronzeback tree snake
20	*Ahaetulla nasutus*	Green vine snake

21	*Boiga trigonata*	Common cat snake
22	*Boiga forsteni*	Forsten's cat snake
23	*Xenochrophis piscator*	checkered keelback
24	*Amphiesma stolata*	Stripped keelback
25	*Macropisthodon plumbicolor*	Green keelback
26	*Lycodon aulicus*	Common wolf snake
27	*Lycodon striatus*	Shaw's wolf snake
28	*Oligodon arnensis*	Common kukri snake
29	*Ptyas mucosus*	Rat snake
30	*Elaphe helena*	Trinket snake
31	*Python molurus*	Rock python
32	*Naja naja*	Indian cobra
33	*Bungarus caeruleus*	Common krait
34	*Callophis sp*	Coral snake
35	*Daboia russelli*	Russell's viper
36	*Hypnale hypnale*	Hump nosed pit viper
37	*Trimeresurus sp*	Pit viper

Amphibians

1	*Bufo melanostictus*	Common toad
2	*Euphlyctis cyanophlyctis*	Skipper
3	*Limnoncetes limnocharis*	Paddy field frog
4	*Microhyla rubra*	Red narrow-mouthed frog
5	*Philautus variabilis*	Variable bush frog

Reference:

Daniels, R.J.R and M.V. Ravi kumar, 1998. Amphibians and Reptiles of Kolli Hills, *Cobra*, 31: 3-5.

LONGEVITY RECORDS OF THE VINE SNAKES

Raju vyas

Sayaji Baug Zoo,
Vadodara - 390 018
Gujarat.

The Sayji Baug Zoo had recieved a green vine snake (*Ahaetula nasutus*) and a brown vine snake (*A. pulverulenta*) from the Saputara musum on October 13, 1988. They were caught from the Pimpari village, Dangs district on December 14, 1987. Both the vine snakes were kept in a wooden cage (52 X 42 X 42 cm). All four sides of the cage were covered with nylon mosquito net for preventing the snakes from damage of soft dermal parts. Usually captive vine snakes rub, their faces against the glass and get hurt which causes infection. The cage was furnished with a dry multi forked tree branch for climbing. Both the snakes were females and in good condition and health. They regularly fed on live lizards once a week. Water was sprinkled in the cage every fourth to sixth day.

The brown vine snake and the green vine snake died on June 13, 1991 and September 24, 1999, respectively. The reasons of death were not known but it is suspected that both died due to dehydration. The brown vine snake and green vine snake lived in captivity for 3.5 and 11.0 years, respectively. It indicates longest longevity records of both the species (Table 1).

According to Whitaker (1978) the green vine snake when born is 20 cm in body length and reaches up to two meters. Daniel (1983) mentioned length of 26-44 cm at birth reaching double the length during first year with same growth rate the second year. He has noted the smallest gravid female as 118 cm long at two years of age. Present captive green vine snake died after 11 years with growth rate of four cm per annum. It was received at the zoo probably at the age of two years. It indicates that the longevity of the species *Ahaetulla nasutus* can be over 14 years.

References :

Daniel, J.C. 1983. *The book of Indian Reptiles.* Bombay Natural History Society. 141pp.

Whitaker, R. 1978. *Common Indian Snakes.* New Delhi. Macmillan Co. of India Ltd.154pp.

Table 1 Measurements of captive vine snakes in cm.

Date of measurements	Green vine snake *Ahaetulla nasutus*	Brown vine snake *A. pulverulenta*
	SVL + TL = TBL	SVL + TL = TBL
Measurements when caught (14th Dec. 1987)	67.0 + 39.0 = 106.0	39.8 + 22.5 = 62.3
Measurements when received at zoo (13 Oct. 1988)	84.0 + 48.0 = 132.0	59.0 + 36.0 = 95.0
Measurements at Death	97.5 + 59.5 = 157.0	73.0 + 47.5 = 120.5

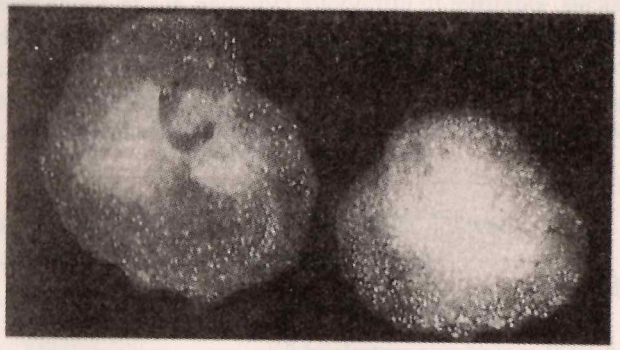
SVL = Snout to vent length; TL = Tail length ; TBL = Total body length.

RANDOM HARVEST

To the Rescue of the Ridley

A report in the *Indian Express* of Jan.5th 2000 says that the Bharat Petroleum Corporation — a Govt. of India undertaking — plans to build a crude oil terminal near the mouth of the Rushikulya river in Ganjam district, Orissa. This is likely to endanger the nesting site of olive ridley sea turtles. This proposal ignores the recommendation of the Orissa State Wildlife Advisory Board to create a marine sanctuary in the very same location. It is disconcerting to note that the National Institute of Oceanography who had been commissioned to do an environment impact assessment of the proposed oil terminal has cleared the proposal. This is a typical example of different agencies of the Government — the State and the Centre — working at cross-purposes to the eternal detriment of the cause of conservation.

The Creator in the Lab



An artificially-produced frog eye, the dark-trimmed dimple in the centre of the left piece, and a part of frog brain cells (right) in this undated picture released by the Japanese scientist, Mr. Makoto Asashima of the Graduate School of Arts and Science at Tokyo University. Mr. Asashima said on Monday his team had discovered how to artificially produce frog eyes and ears using the animal's own embryo cells, a process that he believes will be applicable in humans. The two pieces in the photo are about 2 millimetres in diameter. — AP

courtesy: *The Hindu* Jan.4.2000

All about Indian Crocodilians

The Wildlife Institute of India, Dehra Dun, under the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt. of India, had, in Sept.1997, set up an Environment Information System (ENVIS). Its objectives are to establish a data bank on information related to wildlife and wildlife protected areas, promote national and international cooperation in the area of wildlife and act as a clearing house for information relating to wildlife. ENVIS publishes a bi-annual bulletin which has been a repository of information on specific themes. The latest issue (Vol.2, No.1. June 1999) is devoted to Indian crocodilians. It contains highly informative articles by a number of experts. The bulletin is available on the internet and may be visited at the website www.wii.gov.in

The Decline of the Amphibians

Speculation has been rife for quite some time on the possible causes for the perceptible decline in amphibian populations the world over. The various hypotheses include pollution of water bodies, contamination by pesticides and other chemicals, exposure to ultraviolet radiation due to ozone thinning, rising temperatures and spread of non-native predators. Many biologists believe that a combination of these and other factors may be responsible. Increasing attention is currently being given to the possible role of a chytrid fungus which has been identified as being responsible for amphibian die-offs in Central America and Australia.

(Source: *Froglog* - Newsletter of the Declining Amphibian Population Task Force, Dec.1999).

Restricted Entry

"In 1972, a man was restrained from entering a movie theater in Belem, Brazil because he had a boa constrictor around his waist. Authorities said the snake was under age"

(From *Curious Facts* by John May)

-B.Vijayaraghavan

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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF

CHENNAI SNAKE PARK TRUST

i) To maintain and display a captive collection of snakes and other reptiles as a means of education of the public.

ii) To undertake captive breeding of vulnerable species of snakes and other reptiles.

iii) To promote knowledge on snakes, and other reptiles and amphibians and dispel the erroneous beliefs about them.

iv) To aid and assist research on reptiles and amphibians.

v) To provide facilities for the identification and classification of snakes and other reptiles and amphibians and, for this purpose, maintain a museum of study collections.

vi) To maintain a library of books and other literature on reptiles and amphibians

vii) To publish scientific and semi- scientific literature on snakes and other reptiles and amphibians.

viii) To undertake survey on the distribution and status of snakes and other reptiles and amphibians.

ix) To provide consultancy services on snakes and other reptiles.

x) To provide a common forum for interaction among amateur scientists and friends of reptiles and amphibians.