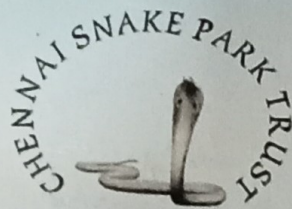


10th
year of
Publication

Cobra

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*Quarterly Newsletter of the
Chennai Snake Park Trust*

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Cover

Winners of the Reptile Quiz Programme with the Chairman,
Trustees and Staff of CSPT and Mr. B. Viswanatha Reddy,
Chandamama India Ltd. (Details P.2-4)



Shining Ones, awake, we seek your chosen temples
In caves and sheltering sandhills and sacred banyan roots;
O lift your dreaming heads from their trance of ageless wisdom,
And weave your mystic measures to the melody of flutes.

Swift ye are as streams, and soundless as the dewfall,
Subtle as the lightning, and splendid as the sun;
Seers are ye, and symbols of the ancient silence,
Where life and death and sorrow and ecstasy are one.

-Sarojini Naidu (1919)

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Editorial

In a recent quiz programme conducted at the Chennai Snake Park, children named tortoises amongst the few reptiles that they listed as favourites. Tortoises symbolise long life and endurance. So has it been with *Cobra* for volume 40 marks the completion of ten years of its publication. What began as a humble initiative to popularise herpetology, has sustained itself over the years.

As always emphasised, *Cobra* has been an instrument in carrying the message of amphibian and reptile conservation amidst a wide audience of both amateurs and professionals. In this issue, special effort has been made to highlight the need to educate children about reptiles. Unexpected results emerged when a large set of urban boys and girls were encouraged to take part in a reptile quiz. Contrary to our expectation, urban school children did not know much about the common reptiles in their neighbourhood. Amongst others, there is in this issue a rather unique narrative on an encounter with the common krait. Few have lived to tell about the gruesome experience of having been bitten by a full-grown krait. The article would certainly be of interest to the readers.

For the first time in its history, *Cobra* received an article from the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, on snakes. This only shows that more and more wildlife biologists of this country are being sensitised to the cause of conserving reptiles. It is hoped that there will be more such contributions from both amateur and professional naturalists. We wish to take this opportunity to thank all those who have over the ten years, contributed articles and photographs to *Cobra* thereby ensuring its uninterrupted publication.

Editor

RESPONSE OF CHILDREN IN CHENNAI TO REPTILES

**R. Aengals, V. Kalaiarasan,
R. Rajarathinam,
and R. J. Ranjit Daniels**
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The Chennai Snake Park has been conducting awareness programmes in rural schools around Chennai during the past three years. It was since realised that the effort spent in educating school children on reptiles within the city of Chennai is relatively small. The general reasoning that had prevailed while considering direct education on reptiles for urban children are the following:

- Children in cities do not encounter reptiles, especially snakes, as frequently as their rural counterparts and hence such specific education is perceived by some as less relevant to them.
- Urban children have greater access to television, books and other materials which enable learning about reptiles both in school and at home.
- Children in the city of Chennai have the opportunity to visit the Chennai Snake Park, the Vandalur Zoo, the Madras Crocodile Bank and the Children's Park and directly learn about reptiles.

While such reasoning could seem perfectly logical and hence acceptable, experience has shown that it is flawed. Herein, we discuss what we have learnt on this during a recent quiz programme on reptiles that was conducted at the Chennai Snake Park.

Starting May 8, 2000, a quiz programme on reptiles was conducted daily till May 30, 2000 at the Chennai Snake Park. This was intended for children in the age group 5-15 years. In all, 127 students (91 boys and 36 girls) from within the city of Chennai attended the programme. The

children were divided into two age groups viz., 5-9 years (21 boys and 14 girls) and 10-15 years (70 boys and 22 girls).

The quiz addressed nearly 250 simple questions. These questions were asked directly to the children of the age group 5-9 years in both English and Tamil. Some of the questions were supplemented with visuals such as photographs and projected slides.

Children in the age group 10-15 years were given answer sheets and asked to write down the answers after each question was asked. All questions were in English. No visuals were used for this group. Each participant in this group was asked to write down his/her name, address and school. Additionally, each one was asked to write down the name of his/her most favourite reptile.

As a rule all children (both age groups) were first sent around the Snake Park with instructions that they observe all the reptiles and carefully read the various sign boards within the Park. Following this, they were made to watch a 30 minute English video film on snake bite.

An analysis of the response of the children to the questions has provided some interesting insights which are discussed below.

Children in the age group 5-9 most often correctly answered questions such as 1) what does the house gecko feed on? and 2) does the cobra carry a jewel in its head? The majority of the children answered these questions correctly. This reflects the child's capacity to observe and reason. If on the other hand we consider two questions that were not rightly answered, a different picture emerges. None of the children answered when asked 'which species of crocodile takes its name after the pot?' Neither could anyone name a marine reptile. While it can be understood that children in Chennai cannot readily relate the term 'gharial' to the pot, it is surprising that, despite an exposure to the sea snakes at the Park, the children could not name a marine reptile.

Children in the age group 10-15 years most frequently correctly answered the following questions: 1) Which is the reliable treatment for snake bite? 2) What is the function of the chameleon's tongue? 3) Which

is the common species of crocodile in India? 4) What does the Aldabra (Giant) Tortoise eat? 5) Why do sea snakes have flattened tails? 6) Are the egg shells of snakes leathery or hard? Questions 2 and 5 were clearly answered by reasoning. In all probability, the others were answered after observing the video film and the sign boards in the Park.

Questions that were not answered by the children were 1) which two species of common Indian snakes paralyse the nervous system with their bites? and 2) how many species of sea turtles are known in India? Both questions are difficult as they require specialised knowledge to be answered correctly.

Most in the age group 10-15 named snakes as their favourite reptile. Amongst the first three most popular reptiles thus voted were king cobra, chameleon and turtles. Snakes in general and the king cobra in particular turned out to be popular amidst both girls and boys. Girls, somehow, seemed to rank turtles right after the snakes - a tendency not demonstrated by the boys.

The answers did indicate that the children, especially in the age group 5-9, knew less about our own reptiles than about non-native ones than our ones

We found the exercise interesting and gave us also an insight into how children respond to reptiles. We now need to structure the programme more carefully incorporating questions that equally address Indian and foreign species of reptiles. To fully assess and understand the differences in perception amongst children of different age groups, sexes and environment, equal number of children from rural schools should also be included in future.

Acknowledgements:

We wish to thank Mr B. Vijayaraghavan, Chairman, Chennai Snake Park Trust, for his encouragement and participation in the quiz programme. Mr N. Krishnakumar IFS (Conservator/Director, Arignar Anna Zoological Park) kindly inaugurated the programme. Thanks are also due to Chandamama India Ltd, for co-sponsoring the programme.



A PRELIMINARY CHECKLIST OF SNAKES OF PENCH TIGER RESERVE, MADHYA PRADESH

M. K. S. Pasha, G. Arcendran,
K. Sankar and Qamar Qureshi

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Dehradun, Uttar Pradesh.

Pench Tiger Reserve (PTR) ($77^{\circ} 55''$ E to $79^{\circ} 35''$ E and $21^{\circ} 8''$ N to 22° N), lies in the southwestern region of Madhya Pradesh. The Tiger reserve comprises of the Pench Sanctuary and the National Park of the same name, covering an area of 757.85sq km of which 292.85 sq km is the National Park. The Pench River, from which the Reserve derives its name, flows through the centre of the Park dividing it into the western Chindwara block and the eastern Seoni block.

The vegetation of PTR has been classified under two major categories, the Tropical Moist Deciduous type and the Tropical Dry Deciduous type (Champion & Seth 1968). During the study, this vegetation was subdivided into six major categories - teak dominant, teak-miscellaneous, *Butea-Zizyphus* woodland, miscellaneous forest with bamboo, *Anogeissus-Boswellia* mixed forest and riparian vegetation. The terrain is gently undulating, criss-crossed by small streams and nullahs most of them being seasonal. The hills have gradual to steep slopes with almost flat tops. A number of valleys and ravines exist as a result of much dissected terrain. The mean altitude is 400 m ASL. Climatically, the area has four distinct seasons: summer (March - June), monsoon (July-August), post-monsoon (September - October) and winter (November-February). The annual range of temperature is -2°C in peak winter to 49°C in peak summer. The average rainfall is 1400 mm.

For the identification of the snakes Whitaker (1978) and Daniel (1983) were referred. This checklist is based on casual observations and encounters of snakes between February 1996 and May 1998, in different habitats types (mentioned above) during the ongoing study on gaur

(*Bos gaurus*) in PTR by the Wildlife Institute of India. A total of 19 species, belonging to 17 genera were documented from the Tiger Reserve. All sightings were between dawn and dusk (Table.1). All species have been listed according to the checklist of Indian snakes in the final report of the BCPP-CAMP workshop for Indian reptiles (Anand Rao et. al. 1998).

The common cobra (*Naja naja*) was recorded from all the vegetation types. All four species of keelbacks mentioned in the checklist were encountered in the moist riparian patches during pre-monsoon and monsoon seasons. The checkered keelback (*Xenochrophis piscator*) was commonly sighted along streams and was often seen feeding on small fishes and aquatic insects. The Indian python (*Python molurus molurus*) was seen on four occasions, in areas with steep rocky slopes. The biggest specimen recorded was about 2.2m in length. Two individuals, one each of two species of blind snakes (*Typhlops acutus* and *Ramphotyphlops braminus*) were found, under decaying logs in Teak-Miscellaneous forest.

During the summer of 1996, relatively more cobras and rat snakes (*Ptyas mucosus*) were encountered in the east block of the National Park. This may be because, in the same year, mass flowering of bamboo occurred in this region. It has been reported that rodent populations increase during this phenomenon (Santapau 1962 and Chauhan & Saxena 1985). This may be a plausible explanation for the increase in the abundance of snakes during that period.

The white-eyed buzzard and crested serpent eagle are known to predate on snakes in PTR. The rat snake, checkered keelback and common bronzeback are some of the common species preyed upon by these raptors.

The varied landscape pattern in PTR offers a good opportunity for ecological research on herpetofauna. More detailed study should be carried out in and around the Protected Area to get a better understanding of the distribution and the existing conservation status of the herpetofauna of the Pench Tiger Reserve.

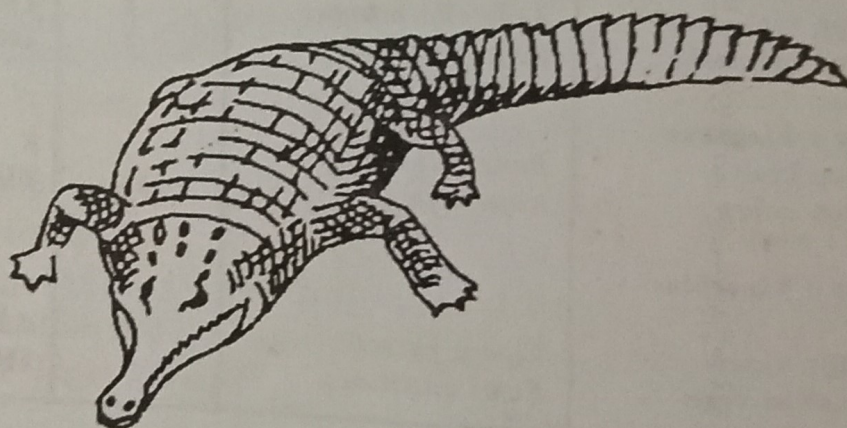
Table 1: Checklist of snakes of Pench Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh.

S. No.	Common name	Scientific name	No. of sightings	Habitat*
1	Family: Typhlopidae Common worm snake	<i>Ramphotyphlops braminus</i>	1	TM
2	Beaked worm snake	<i>Typhoplops acutus</i>	1	TM
3	Family : Boidae Indian python	<i>Python molurus molurus</i>	5	BM, TM, AB
4	Common sand boa	<i>Eryx conicus</i>	2	S
5	Red sand boa	<i>Eryx johnii</i>	2	S
6	Family : Colubridae Common wolf snake	<i>Lycodon aulicus</i>	1	TM, AB
7	Striped keelback	<i>Amphiesma stolata</i>	3	R
8	Green keelback	<i>Macropisthodon plumbicolor</i>	1	R
9	Checkered keelback	<i>Xenchrophis piscator</i>	>20	R
10	Olive keelback	<i>Atretium schistosum</i>	1	R
11	Common trinket snake	<i>Elaphe helena helena</i>	1	R
12	Rat snake	<i>Ptyas mucosus</i>	>15	S, TD, TM,
13	Common bronzeback	<i>Dendrelaphis tristis</i>	2	TD, TM
14	Common vine snake	<i>Ahaetulla nasutus</i>	1	TM
15	Common cat snake	<i>Boiga trigonata</i>	1	TM
16	Family : Elapidae Common krait	<i>Bungarus caeruleus</i>	5	S
17	Common cobra	<i>Naja naja</i>	>15	TM, S, TD, AB
18	Family : Viperidae Russell's viper	<i>Vipera russelli</i>	1	AB
19	Saw scaled viper	<i>Echis carinatus</i>	1	TM, AB

*Habitat: TM (Teak-Miscellaneous), TD (Teak dominant), BM (Bamboo-Miscellaneous), R (Riparian), S (*Butea-Zizyphus* scrubland), AB (*Anogeissus-Boswellia*).

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DROUGHT AND REPTILES : AN EXPERIENCE IN RAJASTHAN

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Rajasthan is one of the States of the Indian Union which receives low rainfall. Every third or fourth year remains a drought year in this State. Summer months viz. April, May and June become very hot and dry and most of the water bodies become dry during these months. Any one drought year of a decade may prove fatal to the aquatic life. A large number of molluscs, fish and reptiles are destroyed due to lack of water in this State.

Year 2000 is a severe drought year in the State. Even dead storage is not left in the summer in a large numbers of anicuts, dams and reservoirs. Gangetic softshelled turtle (*Trionyx gangeticus*), a large turtle of many large water bodies, becomes the target animal of shikaris in the drying water bodies. Some years back, a large number of *T. gangeticus* of Mez Dam of Bhilwara district were captured for flesh by many nomadic communities and other natives. Due to its giant size, this turtle is well known to the natives. This is called "*Chaatal*" in southern Rajasthan and "*Paatal*" in eastern part of State. This year, a large number of *T. gangeticus* were rescued by the Wildlife Wing of the State from Madar Dam in Udaipur district. It was observed that small dams prove more fatal to these turtles than large dams. Fateh Sagar, Baghdara Talab of Udaipur district are relatively more safe since they have dead storage even in severe drought. Last year, during summer, I found a *T. gangeticus* struggling for life on the dry bed of Ram Sagar Dam in Jaipur district. I shifted it to a perennial water source with the help of my staff.

BITTEN BY A COMMON KRAIT (*BUNGARUS CAERULEUS*)

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Snakebite is always a hot topic. Popular literature, folklore and movies have perhaps exaggerated both the probability of snakebite and the likely outcome of it. Furthermore, snakebite, while no doubt a serious matter, is not a death sentence as often implied. Snakes, poisonous or otherwise, have excited a lot of debate and superstition over the ages, resulting in unwarranted fear and sometimes even panic. This fear and panic can lead to:

- Improper treatment for envenomation.
- Dangerous over-treatment for bites in which envenomation does not occur.
- Complicating the outcome of the bite.
- Unnecessary destruction of snakes and their habitats.

The following incident took place in Chennai, on the 2nd June 1999 at the outskirts. I had gone for photographing snakes and encountered a common krait, which measured 74 cm in length with a mid body girth of 8cm. The snake was on the ground where there was mild sunlight and while I was zooming in on the snake to take the photo, it became active due to the surface heat and started moving very fast. Realizing that it was not possible to take photo of a moving snake, I tried to stop it with the camera box. To my surprise, it lunged forward at high speed and bit me on my right thumb. This accident happened at 11.05 am. I reacted immediately and without wasting any time took out my hand kerchief

and tied it round the base of my right thumb and removed my shoe lace and tied it around my biceps. I reached the main road and was waiting for someone to pass by so that I could rush to some hospital. I was fortunate as shortly I was taken in an auto to Roypettah Government Hospital. During all this time I was very cool, trying to console myself that nothing actually would happen to me and I should keep up my will power. At 11.40 am I was in the Roypettah Government Hospital. I was rushed to the intensive care ward and was administered dextrose saline. I was conscious all this time. At 11.55 am the doctor came and checked me and after questioning me and seeing my symptoms was convinced that it was a case of krait bite.

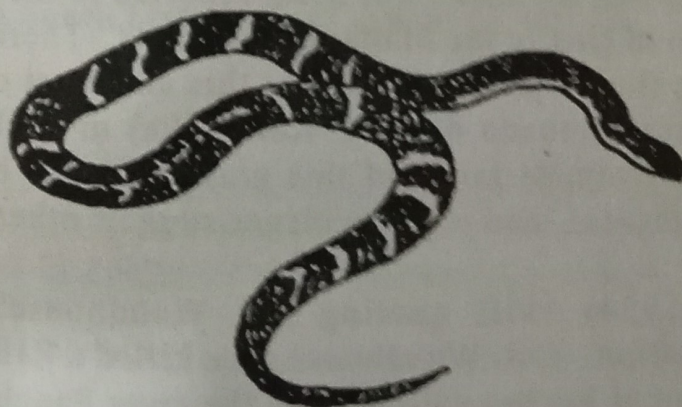
Immediately the antivenom serum (ASVS) was administered to me. Before this a blood sample was taken to check the clotting rate. At 4.00 pm I started having severe pain on the backside of my left hip. I was unable to control the pain and wanted to lie on a plain surface but the nurse did not allow me to get down from the bed. I was adamant and with the help of a friend I got up and lied down on the flat surface below my cot. At 4.45pm I felt a little bit relaxed and again was back on the bed. Now I felt as if my intestines were expanding and contracting. I was loosing sensation in my right hand, and the thumb started to pain. Beside this I was not able to control my eyelids and I had a lot of difficulty in opening my eyes. At 6.00 pm my vision was blurring and I was not able to clearly see any object in front of me. At 7.40 pm I had a slight temperature and sweated profusely. At 8.00 pm I felt as though a heavy weight was on me and was not able to move or speak. At 11.00 pm I was not able to open my mouth and my throat had become dry and I was not able to swallow. Now I had the feeling that something was pressing my neck choking me. I was awake the whole night and I was having severe headache and body pain. The next day the doctor came and examined me. I was not able to open my mouth, which was dry, there was a slight problem in my breathing and also I was not able to open my eyes. I was using my fingers to open my eyes; bright light caused severe pain in my eyes and eyelids.

The doctor had my ECG taken and BP checked. Assured that I was out of danger the doctor said the dryness in the throat would last for two more days, and that the ASVS was neutralizing the venom and everything

would soon be normal. At 5.00 pm two more vials of ASVS were administered. On 4th June at 7.00 pm the doctor examined me. This time he asked me to open my eyes without the help of my fingers and I was able to open them a little. Next the doctor asked me to hold his right thumb tightly with my right hand. I held his finger tightly and after a minute he changed his hands and asked to do the same thing with my left hand. I held his finger tightly and he could not pull free. He now pressed his right hand on my right leg and asked me to lift my leg. I was able to lift both my legs even with heavy pressure on my legs. The doctor once again assured me that, I did not have any sign of paralysis and my nervous system was functioning well. For three days I was administered drips and ASVS. On all these days I took only liquid food. On 5th June I was discharged to the general ward as my health was slowly recovering and on the 6th I was discharged from the hospital.

At the time of my discharge from the hospital the doctor told me that I should be very careful with my health and within a period of three months there could be a possibility of organ damage. Now it is almost a year and there has been no problem except that sometimes I feel giddiness for a few minutes. I have fully recovered the sensation in my bitten finger.

My suggestion to snake handlers, especially to those handling venomous snakes; "one should be very careful, as a fraction of a second's misjudgment can be fatal. Always expect the unexpected".





WHAT IS THE NORTHERNMOST RANGE OF THE KING COBRA *OPHIOPHAGUS HANNAH* (CANTOR) IN THE WESTERN GHATS ?

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The King Cobra or Hamadryad *Ophiophagus hannah* (Cantor) is the longest venomous snake in the world. It is found over a wide area of south and southeast Asia. In India, the snake is said to be rare and occurs in the hill forests of Himalayas, the north-east, the Western Ghats and the Eastern coast including the Andaman Islands.

It seems that the range of this snake along the Western Ghats is not well-defined. Various works give the range differently and broadly as : hills & forests of Southern India (Gharpurey, 1935); peninsular India - mountain ranges and their vicinity (Smith, 1943); Nilgiri, Londha - Karwar (Deoras, 1965); the dense forests of Western Ghats (Daniel, 1983). Only Whitaker (1978) precisely describes the ranges as "Western Ghats upto Goa". This means that the snake was never reported in the past and is not found to the north of Goa in the Maharashtra Ghats. There seems to be a consensus among the herpetologists about this and most of them regard Castle Rock (Uttar Kannada district, Karnataka) or Molem Sanctuary (Goa) as the northernmost range of this graceful snake in the Western Ghats. But documented and other evidence suggest otherwise.

1. Col. Wall (1924) while quoting Col. Woodhouse furnishes the following information: Col. Woodhouse once killed a King Cobra in the flooded compound of his bungalow along the river Panchaganga on the outskirts of Kolhapur. The river was in full flood and the cobra was thought to have drifted in the flooding river.



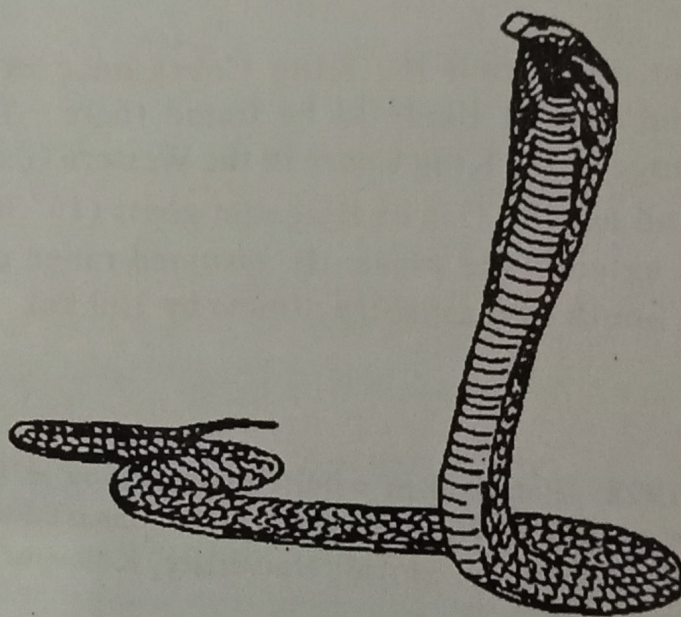
2. In his treatise about the snakes of Maharashtra, Col. Gharpurey (1928) does include the King Cobra as a snake from the region but does not mention any specific locality of its occurrence.
3. Daniel (1974) describes King Cobra under the 'Reptile' section in the 'Fauna' volume of Maharashtra State Gazetteers, but without any comment on its distribution or range.
4. Ms. Desai (1992) mentions the sighting of a King Cobra in 1964 in the dense forests of Patyacha Dung & Ganganbawda in the Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary. She treats this as the last record!!
5. Subbhash Puranik (Presently RFO, Mahabaleshwar) (pers. Comm.) when posted in Phonda area met a drawing teacher from Chandgad taluka (southwest of Kolhapur) - who had encountered a big black snake standing erect upto the shoulders in the nearby jungle. Suspecting the snake to be a King Cobra the forest officer requested the teacher to make a drawing of it. Mr. Puranik adds that the sketch of the snake made by the teacher (with crossbars on the body too!) perfectly resembled a King Cobra. The concerned teacher was in no way connected with or interested in wildlife or snakes.

There is no doubt that the King Cobra once existed in southern Maharashtra and is still likely to be found there. Therefore the real northernmost range of the King Cobra in the Western Ghats is the Kolhapur ghats (17° N) and not the Goa or Belgaum ghats ($15^{\circ} 30''$ N) as presently believed. This extends the presently assumed range of the King Cobra northward into South Maharashtra almost by 100 km.

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**FIRST RECORD OF THE BRONZE SKINK
(*MABUYA MACULARIA*)
IN THE GUINDY NATIONAL PARK**

V. Kalaiarasan
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An account of reptiles in the Guindy National Park reported the presence of three species of skinks namely *Mabuya carinata*, *Mabuya trivittata* and *Riopa punctata* (Kalaiarasan, 2000). Recently (June, 2000), I have observed a species of skink in the leaf litter near the adjoining Snake Park. After noticing a specimen, the area was thoroughly searched and I observed three other specimens also. After careful examination, it was identified as *Mabuya macularia* which had not been reported earlier. The skink was bronze above, spotted with black; the belly white. In the adult male the sides of neck and throat were bright red in colour. A single adult male measured around 50 mm in snout-vent length. The females were gravid.

Five variants of this species have been described. These are distributed throughout the Indian subcontinent (Smith, 1935). The range of one variant of this species is reported as south of latitude 12° N and extends upto the western side of the peninsula as far north as latitude 16° N. The maximum recorded snout-vent length is 65 mm. Whether the present observation is of this variant of *M. macularia* needs to be verified.

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A STRANGE FOOD HABIT OF THE GARDEN LIZARD (*CALOTES VERSICOLOR*)

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Calotes versicolor is an insectivorous lizard that feeds largely on insects, their larvae and spiders as reported by Smith (1935). It feeds mainly on ants and occasionally takes small birds, nestlings, frogs and other small animals as reported by Daniel (1983). Murthy (1990) observed that it feeds on various kinds of large diurnal insects like crickets, cockroaches, grasshoppers and butterflies.

Daniel and Shull (1963) have reported *C. versicolor* eating unripe pods with soft seeds of the lima bean. Sekar (1988) mentioned that it feeds on buds of *Tabernaemontana*. Devasahayam and Anita Devasahayam (1990) observed this lizard chew and get moisture from plant tissues of the tender succulent shoots of cow pea *Vigna sinensis*. Interestingly, in the present observation that was made in the Chennai Snake Park premises, *C. versicolor* males were often found to feed on fallen flowers of *Morinda tinctoria* and occasionally flowers of *Cassia marginata*.

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RANDOM HARVEST

How not to kill with devotion

The *nag panchami* is a festival of snakes celebrated in many parts of India like Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bengal and Bihar. The festival usually falls early in August. The rites and customs take different forms in different parts. In Maharashtra, this is celebrated in a manner that has, for some years, attracted the ire of animal lovers and conservationists. Snakes are caught in large numbers by snake charmers and displayed before devotees in town and country who 'feed' them with milk and such other stuff which the snake doesn't really care for. The snakes are supposed to be released after the worship, but there are heavy mortalities because of the force-feeding, starvation and rough handling and also because of surreptitious slaughter for skins.

A news-item from Mumbai in the *New Indian Express* of the 5th Aug. 2000, however, gives scope for cheer. This year, the joint efforts of animal activists, police, forest officials and ordinary citizens have put a brake on this senseless practice. "The police swooped down on thousands of snake charmers and managed to rescue 70,000 snakes from them". The devotees, therefore, had to make do with offerings of milk and money before brass idols of snakes. Surely, the snakes from their hideouts would, for the first time, have blessed them for this act of kindness.

Heavyweight

Twentyeight year old 'Chai Yai' of the Sumatprakarn Crocodile Farm near Bangkok has found it's way into the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the world's largest captive crocodile. Six metres in length, it weighs 1,114 kg.

(Source: *The Hindu Business Line*, June 11, 2000)

Down-sizing the Jumbos

The giant Galapagos tortoises at the Zurich Zoo have been put on a weight-reducing, low-energy, high-fibre diet after it was found that they weighed ten times (?) as much as animals in the wild.

(Source: *The Hindu Business Line*, July 23, 2000)

Walking with feet up

Keller Autumn, associate professor of biology at Lewis and Clark College has announced the discovery that geckos are able to walk upside down on ceilings not because their feet have adaptations for suction, as commonly believed, but because the microscopic hairs on their feet exert a sort of molecular attraction.

(Source: *The New Indian Express*, June 25, 2000)

Vitamin-E for resistance against snake bites.

A study by Ashis Kumar Mukherjee of Tezpur University in Assam published in a recent issue of *Toxicon* says that regular intake of food, rich in Vitamin-E, like soyabean, sunflower and corn oils and nuts delay the onset of symptoms from snakebite. Pre-treatment with Vitamin-E reduces snake venom-induced cell damages and increases the life span of red blood cells after envenomation. The scientist says that this finding can be of immense help in areas with high incidence of snake bites and far away from health care centres. If Vitamin-E makes snakebite victims resistant to the damaging action of snake venom even to a small extent, onset of symptoms would be delayed and they could be treated successfully. Ashis Kumar Mukherjee conducted the study together with scientists from the Burdwan Medical College in West Bengal.

(Source: *The Times of India*, June 6, 2000)

- B.Vijayaraghavan

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- 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.