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Short Communication

## New locality record of Montane Trinket snake *Coelognathus helena monticollaris* (Schulz, 1992) from Vansda National Park, Navsari, Gujarat, India

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During a visit to the Vansda National Park (VNP), Gujarat, we spotted a male specimen of Montane Trinket snake *Coelognathus helena monticollaris*, Schulz, 1992, (20°45' 25.55" N 73°28' 36.49" E) resting near a water body at the elevation of 487 ft., on May 21, 2011. Vansda National Park (Figure 1) (20°51'16"-21°21'22"N & 73°20'30"-73°31'20"E) in Vansda Taluka of Navsari District is a hilly terrain with hills of moderate altitudes from 110-360m, an extension of the Sahyadri Range (North Western Ghat). After 1986 the forest area of 23.99 km<sup>2</sup> was declared as National Park under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 by the State Forest Department, Government of Gujarat (notification no. GANV/3585/WLP/2076/87594 dated 13.vi.1986). As the forest forms continuous tract with the forest of adjoining district of Dangs, the sanctuary is managed by South Dangs Forest Division. The forest belongs to the category of tropical moist deciduous forests and the terrain represents northern and western limits of the Western Ghats. The northeastern boundary of the park is formed by Waghai- Bilimora railway line along with parallel Ambica-Khapri River while the southern boundary is marked by Navtad-Waghai State Highway. The western side is marked by Navtad-Kala Amba road. The forest of VNP is of southern Indian tropical moist deciduous forest type and further classified as southern moist mixed deciduous forest, bamboo break and tropical riverine forest (Champion & Seth, 1968 and Vyas, 2004).

This species is endemic to Western Ghats and reported from Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala (Whitaker & Captain 2008), in Central India from Amravati in Maharashtra (Nande & Deshmukh, 2007) and a single record from Sijhora road, Balaghat in Madhya Pradesh (Thakur 2011). According to literature published for reptiles in Gujarat and for Vansda National Park (Vyas, 2000 and 2004, Whitaker and Captain 2008), this is the first record of Montane Trinket snake from Vansda National Park and as well as from the Gujarat state. This represents significant northern range extension for this species.

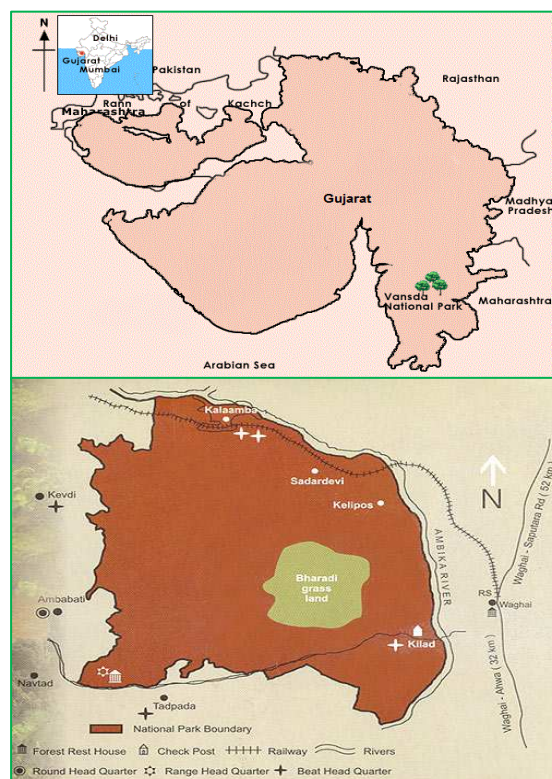


Figure 1a: Map of Gujarat showing Vansda National Park (b) Map of Vansda National Park

The genus *Coelognathus* (Fitzinger) is represented by three species and two sub species *C flavolineata* (Schlegel), *C helena* (Daudin), *C radiata* (Boie), *C h helena* (Daudin) and *C h monticollaris*. (Schulz). The specimen is identified based on scale count (Table 1) and on the morphological characters (Figure 2) (Schulz 1996; Daniel 2002, Whitaker and Captain 2008), proper length and weight of the specimen is also recorded (Table 1). This species has a slender body, scale of hind body and tail keeled. Tan or olive, and chocolate brown with banded fore body (Figure 2- a). The bands consist of several rows of large pale yellow oval or round spots encircled with black colour. Hind body has lateral stripes. Belly white with series of black marking on each side (Figure 2- c) (Whitaker and Captain, 2008). According IUCN status it is consider as a "Vulnerable" (Molur & Walker 1998).

**Table 1: Scale count and further study of Montane Trinkate Snake**

Scale	Count
Dorsal scale	26
Ventral	229
Anal divided	77
Subocular	1
Postocular	2
Temporal	2+3
Supralabial	10 (6 <sup>th</sup> and 7 <sup>th</sup> )
Loreal	1
Length (cm)	94
Weight (gm)	<b>On May 21:</b> 136.64 <b>On June 14:</b> 139.54



**Figure 2: Montane Trinket snake *Coelognathus helena monticollaris* (Schulz, 1992)**

a) Dorsal View b) Lateral view, c) Ventral view and d) Skin molting of specimen

The specimen was studied in captive condition for further observation. The specimen was very calm, often getting aggressive. In captive condition it had feed on *Hemidactylus leschenaultia*, *Hemidactylus brookii*, *Hemidactylus flaviviridis*, *Mabuya carinata* and Pinkies of *Mus musculus*. On May 22, 2011 it was kept in acrylic tank of 6ft in length 2ft in breath. It was fed alternately till June 4, 2011. After June 4 it was observed that body colour and especially eyes were getting dull in milky colour. During these Ecdysis process, *Hemidactylus brokii* was offered but specimen totally ignored it. On 7<sup>th</sup> June at 1640 h five Pinkies of *Mus musculus* were offered to specimen, one *Mus musculus* was grasp suddenly and forcibly constricted, just before getting finished, it strike out and took 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> mice together in coil. Within 45 mins specimen had engulfed four Pinkies of *Mus musculus*. On

June 13, 2011 specimen slough its entire outer layer of skin (Figure 2- d). Then the specimen was released on June 14, 2011 at same place in Vansda National Park (20°45' 25.55" N 73°28' 36.49" E) from where it was previously collected.

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