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Short Communication

Note on Observed Snakes in Satpura Tiger Reserve and Record of *Psammophis Longifrons* Boulenger, 1896 Madhya Pradesh, India

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Scientific literature available on Satpura Tiger Reserve shows that extensive study has been conducted on mammals and birds but there is a lack of information on the herpetofaunal diversity. Fauna of Pachmarhi Biosphere Reserve Editor – director (2008) is the sole published record where eight snakes' species are reported from study area. In present survey, we have reported two new locality records of *Coelognathus helena monticollaris* (Kumbhar *et al.*, 2011) and *Psammophis longifrons*. Satpura Tiger Reserve (STR), (22° 19' - 22° 30'N and 77° 56' - 78° 20'E) is a 1427.87 km² protected area located in the Hoshangabad district of Madhya

Pradesh state in Central India (Figure a). It comprises of Pachmarhi and Bori Wildlife Sanctuaries and Satpura National Park. It has six ranges Park Pachmarhi, Park Kamti, Pachmarhi, Bori, Game range Matkuli, Game range Bhaura respectively (Kumbhar *et al.*, 2011). The terrain is highly undulating. Forest is mainly dominated by *Tactona grandis*, *Shorea robusta*, *Bauchania latifolia*, *Terminalia arjuna*, *Emblca officinalis*, *Madhuca indica*, *Rauwolfia serpentina*. The forest types consists of Southern moist mixed deciduous forest, Southern dry mixed deciduous forest, Dry peninsulas Sal forest (Champion and Seth, 1968).

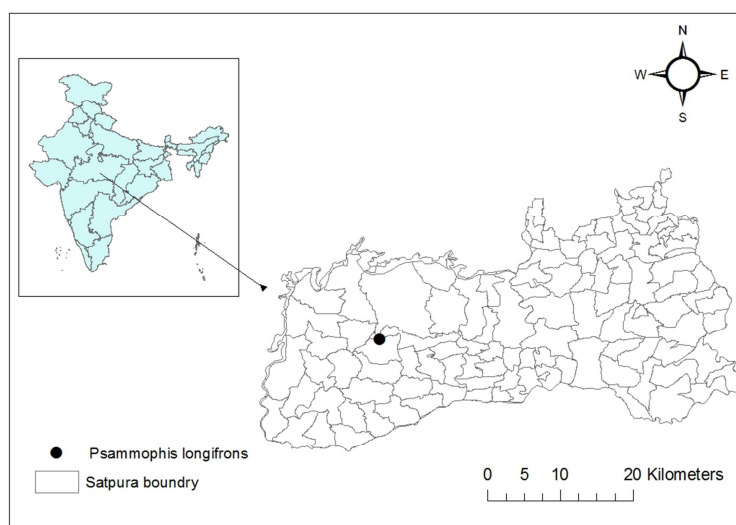


Figure a: Map shows of Satpura Tiger Reserve with location of *P. longifrons*

This study is based on casual observations, encounters as well as random search for snakes in different habitat types (mentioned above) in between period from October 2010 to February 2011. Major habitat was searched and trails randomly. Standard methodology was followed i.e. visual search and physical capture of reptiles (Sutherland, 1997). Active searches involved turning

rocks, and logs peeling barks, digging through leaf litter. Also heliothermic (basking) reptiles were also searched along forest trail, rock edges and stream sides with sticks and torch light. Encountered individuals were identified on the basis of available literature (Smith, 1943; Whitaker and Captain, 2008).

This study reported second new locality record of *Psammaophis longifrons* Boulenger, 1896 (Figure b) from Madhya Pradesh after Ingle (2009) had reported it from Ujjain district. However Pachmarhi Biosphere Reserve does not have any published record of this species in Book of Fauna of Panchmarhi Biosphere Reserve (Editor – Director, 2008). This species was recorded on 31st January 2011 in Kamti range (22° 28' 19.54"N & 78° 04' 21.02" E) partially hidden in leaf litter of mixed dry deciduous forest dominated by *Tactona grandis* and *Dendrocalamous stictus*. The specimen was caught and released after collection of morphological and scale count data. *Psammaophis longifrons* is

categorized as Lower Risk- Near Threatened by IUCN (Molur and Walker, 1998). Species was identified based on earlier descriptions (Smith, 1943; Whitaker and Captain, 2008). Specimen was 116 cm long pale brownish above and white below. Scales of the ventral row were black edged forming a chain. Supralabial 8th, 4th & 5th touching eye, 2 Postocular, 2+3 Temporal, 2 Internasal, 2 Prefrontal, 1 frontal, 2 Parietal, Scale in 17: 17: 13 rows, Ventral 168, Subcaudal 79. Eyes are round pupil, individual identified as male based on hemipenis present.



Image b: Stout Sand Snake *Psammaophis longifrons*.

Distribution of stout sand snake range of the species from Bombay presidency north of Lat 19° (Thana and Damanganga district, Bulsar, Panch Mahals); C. P. Nagpur (Smith 1943). Vyas (1987) reported the occurrence of this species from Kamrej Taluka, Surat district, Gujarat; Whitaker and captain (2008) have reported the range to Maharashtra, Gujarat north of Mumbai (Pal and Mirza, 2009), and recently Nande and Deshmukh (2007) reported it from Amravati district. Chandra and Gajbe (2005) reported it from Madhya Pradesh but did not provide any precise locality.

A total of 22 species of snakes belonging to 6 families were recorded during the present survey (Table 1). Family Colubridae topped the list with 13 species. The common cobra *Naja naja* and Russell's

viper (*Daboia russelii*) was recorded from all the vegetation types. Brahminy Blind Snake (*Ramphotyphlops braminus*) was recorded in Teak-Miscellaneous forest, common sand boa (*Gongylophis conicus*) was encountered in riparian patches. Bamboo Pit Viper (*Trimeresurus gramineus*) was also recorded in Sal – Miscellaneous forest. Out of these 22 species, 17 are Near Threatened according to IUCN red list (Molur & Walker, 1998). The varied landscape pattern in Satpura Tiger Reserve offers a good opportunity for ecological research on herpetofaunal study. More detailed study should be carried out in Pachmarhi Biosphere Reserve to get a better understanding of the distribution and conservation status of herpetofauna.

Table 1: Checklist of newly recorded Snakes species in Satpura Tiger reserve

Sr. No.	Scientific name	Common name	Status by IUCN
	Family – Typhlopidae		
1	<i>Ramphotyphlops braminus (Daudin)</i>	Brahminy Blind Snake	LR-nt
	Family – Uropeltidae		
2	<i>Uropeltis ellioti (Gray)</i>	Elliot's Sheildtail	LR-nt
	Family – Boidae		
3	<i>Pythom molurus (Linn)</i>	Indian Rock Python	LR-nt
4	<i>Gongylophis conicus (Schneider)</i>	Common Sand Boa	LR-nt
	Family – Colubridae		
5	<i>Coelognathus helena monticollaris (Sculz)</i>	Montane Trinket Snake	VU
6	<i>Ptyas mucosus (Linn)</i>	Indian Rat Snake	LR-nt
7	<i>Argyrogena fasciolata (Shaw)</i>	Banded Racer	LR-nt
8	<i>Oligodon taeniolatus (Jerdon)</i>	Russell's Kukri Snake	LR-nt
9	<i>Dendrelaphis tristis (Daudin)</i>	Common Bronzeback	LR-lc
10	<i>Lycodon striatus (Shaw)</i>	Barred Wolf Snake	LR-nt
11	<i>Lycodon aulicus (Linn)</i>	Common Wolf Snake	LR-lc
12	<i>Xenochrophis piscator (Schneider)</i>	Checkered Keelback	LR-lc
13	<i>Amphiesma stolatum (Linn)</i>	Striped Keelback	LR-nt
14	<i>Macropisthodon plumbicolor (Cantor)</i>	Green Keelback	LR-nt
15	<i>Boiga forsteni (Dum. & Bib)</i>	Forsten's Cat Snake	LR-nt
16	<i>Psammophis longifrons (Boulenger)</i>	Stout Sand Snake	LR-nt
17	<i>Ahaetulla nasuta (Lacepede)</i>	Common Vine Snake	LR-nt
	Family – Elapidae		
18	<i>Bungarus caeruleus (Schneider)</i>	Common Krait	LR-nt
19	<i>Naja naja (Linn)</i>	Spectacled Cobra	LR-nt
	Family – Viperidae		
20	<i>Daboia russelii (shaw)</i>	Russell's Viper	LR-nt
21	<i>Echis carinatus (Schneider)</i>	Saw - Scaled Viper	LR-nt
22	<i>Trimeresurus gramineus (Shaw)</i>	Bamboo Pit Viper	LR-nt

Note: LR-nt –Lower Risk Near Threatened; VU – Vulnerable; LR-lc – Lower Risk Least Concern

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