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Short Communication

## New Locality Record of Brown Vine Snake *Ahaetulla pulverulenta* in Seshachalam Biosphere Reserve, Eastern Ghats, Andhra Pradesh, India

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### Abstract:

Brown vine snake *Ahaetulla pulverulenta* is a very uncommon species which was known to occur in India along the Western Ghats from Gujarat to Kerala, Tamil Nadu in Alagarkoil Hills and Sundarbans. Totally 42 field days were spent to rapidly assess the Herpetofauna during August 2011 to June 2012 with the objective to determine the present distribution and presence of the herpetofauna species. Data collection will be carried out by using Visual Encounter Survey Method. We report sighting Brown vine snake *Ahaetulla pulverulenta* in Tirumala Hills, Andhra Pradesh on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2012 around 1130 hrs during our field survey. . We found the snake near the Cottage (ANC 437) close to Tirumala temple. With the addition of Brown vine snake *Ahaetulla pulverulenta*, the number reaches 42. Also everyone should realise that the protection of habitat is an important aspect in conservation of such species.

**Key words:** New Locality Record, *Ahaetulla pulverulenta*, Seshachalam Hills, Andhra Pradesh

### 1.0 Introduction:

Brown vine snake *Ahaetulla pulverulenta* is a very uncommon species which was known to occur in India along the Western Ghats from Gujarat to Kerala, Tamil Nadu in Alagarkoil Hills (Whitaker and Captain, 2004), Sri Lanka (Somaweera, 2006) and Sundarbans (Gertrud and Helmut, 2010). This species is characterised by thin, dark brown rhomboidal mark on top of the head with a brown stripe passing through the eye on side of the head. Its eye is large, transversely oval with horizontal pupil. The head is extremely pointed with enlarged nose tip. Seshachalam Hills, the first Biosphere Reserve in Andhra Pradesh, located in southern Eastern Ghats of Chittoor and Kadapa districts. It is spread over 4755.99 Km<sup>2</sup>. The vegetation is a unique mix of the tropical southern dry mixed deciduous types. The elevation ranges from 150 to 1,130 m, the terrain is undulating, with deep forest-covered valleys.

The reserve is home to 11 endemic plant species, mostly *Cycas beddomei*, *Pterocarpus santalinus*, *Terminalia pallida*, *Syzygium alternifolium*, *Shorea tammaggia* *Boswellia ovalifoliolata* etc. It is the richest floristic hot spot harboring many endemic and rare plants. The entire sanctuary is an uninhabited large chunk of dry deciduous Red Sanders bearing forest, forming catchments to Swarnamukhi and Penna rivers, both in Chittoor and Kadapa districts.



**Figure 1:** Distribution map for *Ahaetulla pulverulenta* in India (after Whitaker and Captain, 2004), Sri Lanka (Somaweera, 2006) and Sundarbans (Gertrud and Helmut, 2010), with an yellow spot indicating the new record for Seshachalam Hills, Andhra Pradesh

### 2.0 Methodology:

Totally 42 field days were spent to rapidly assess the Herpetofauna during August 2011 to June 2012 with the objective to determine the present distribution and presence of the herpetofauna species. Data

collection will be carried out by using Visual Encounter Survey Method. The sanctuary area was different zones like, Road, water bodies, scrub jungle and tank bund, each zone was randomly explored on the basis of habitat structure and, possibility and availability of the herpetofauna species.



**Figure 2:** Brown vine snake *Ahaetulla pulverulenta*

### 3.0 Observations:

With this background, we report sighting Brown vine snake *Ahaetulla pulverulenta* in Tirumala Hills, Andhra Pradesh on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2012 around 1130 hrs during our field survey. Tirumala hills are popularly known as the seven hills of Lord Sri Venkateswara. We found the snake near the Cottage (ANC 437) close to Tirumala temple, (13°40'N & 79°21'E) Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh (Fig. 1 & 2). The specimens were identified based on descriptions available in the literature (Whitaker & Captain, 2004).

**Status:** Uncommon. Species and listed as Lower Risk-near threatened (Molur & Walker, 1998). The number of snake species known from Andhra Pradesh is 41 (Sanyal et al, 1993; Daniel, 2002; Whitaker & Captain, 2004; Rao et al, 2005; Srinivasulu & Das, 2008; Guptha et al, 2012). With the addition of Brown vine snake *Ahaetulla pulverulenta*, the number reaches 42.

### 4.0 Recommendation:

Record of Brown vine snake *Ahaetulla pulverulenta* in Seshachalam Hills shows our incomplete understanding on the distribution of fauna. We recommend that further studies be carried out in the Eastern Ghats and its surrounding areas at the earliest possible opportunity to confirm the presence of many such new species. Also everyone should realise that the protection of habitat is an important aspect in conservation of such species.

### 5.0 Acknowledgements:

The authors are very much thankful to Sri A.V. Joseph, IFS, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest and

Chief Wildlife Warden, Andhra Pradesh for their co-operation and permission. Special thanks to Sri D.Baskar Naidu, Forest Maistry TTD for giving information about the presence of the snake. Athorus also thankful to Sri Sahadeva Kethari, for providing the photograph. Finally, we would like to thank Mrs. Vamsee Priya for her valuable comments and suggestions in this paper.

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