
A CHECKLIST OF SNAKES IN VETERINARY COLLEGE CAMPUS, MANNUTHY, KERALA

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ABSTRACT

A checklist of snakes in the campus of College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Mannuthy, Kerala, is presented based on observation and identification of snakes based on morphology and scale patterns. The snakes were spotted in all the different terrains in the campus, and the study revealed the presence of 21 species of snakes, belonging to seven families and 19 genera. The study revealed the diversity of snakes in human inhabited areas and farmlands and the significance of such landscapes in conservation.

Keywords: Snakes, Veterinary College, Thrissur

INTRODUCTION

College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences is located at Mannuthy, Thrissur district of Kerala, and extends over an area of 124 ha. The area falls within the longitude of 76°13' East and latitude of

10°14' North. The land comprises of hilly terrains and plains with fodder grasslands, orchards, gardens, scrub jungles and residential areas. The campus enjoys moderate weather. The mean annual maximum temperature was 32.53°C and the minimum was 22.9°C in the year 2021. The major source of atmospheric precipitation is the south-west and north-east monsoons with a mean annual rainfall of 3473.9 mm which supports luxuriant vegetation in the campus which in turn supports the animal diversity.

Aengals *et al.* (2018) reported 304 species of snakes belonging to 36 families in India and Palot (2015) recorded a total of 102 species of snakes under 12 families in Kerala. Most of the major venomous species of snakes observed in India are also found in Kerala. They are usually spotted in agricultural land and near human settlements searching for rodents (Das, 2003).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The checklist is based on observations from January 2016 to April 2021 covering the entire study area. The snakes randomly sighted were observed for identification features based on their morphology, dorsal and ventral scale patterns, and head shield arrangements. The specimens were examined carefully for this and identified by using identification keys published by Murthy and Chandrasekhar (1995), Daniel (2002) and Whitaker and Captain (2004). The recordings were entered in a data sheet and compiled, and the taxonomic classification presented was based on Palot (2015).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 21 species of snakes belonging to seven families and 19 genera were identified during the study (Table 1). These included snakes restricted to the hill forests of Kerala and widely distributed ones of the plains. They were spotted in fodder grasslands, orchards, gardens, scrub jungles and also in residential areas. The list included five venomous snakes which represented five out of the nine genera of poisonous snakes reported in Kerala. Among the 21 species of snakes identified, Indian Rock Python belonged to Schedule I of the Wild Life Protection Act of 1972. Four of them belonged to Schedule II and

the rest in Schedule IV (Palot, 2015). Status of these snakes is not threatened and all of them are categorized as Least Concern (LC) or Not Evaluated (NE) as per Red List of IUCN (Srinivasulu *et al.*, 2014).

CONCLUSION

A very vivid diversity of snakes existed in the College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences campus at Mannuthy and effort must be initiated to protect them by maintaining a good harmony between snakes and humans. Awareness on snakes and their role in balancing ecosystem health must be created among students, staff and residents of the campus.

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Table 1. Checklist of Snakes in College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Campus, Mannuthy, Thrissur, Kerala

Sl. No.	Family	Common name	Scientific name	IUCN Red List category	WPA schedule
1	Typhlopidae (worm snakes)	Brahminy Blind Snake	<i>Indotyphlops brahminus</i>	NE	IV
		Beaked Blind Snake (Beaked Worm snake)	<i>Grypotyphlops acutus</i>	LC	IV
2	Pythonidae (Pythons)	Indian Rock Python	<i>Python molurus</i>	LC	I
3	Erycidae (Boas)	Common Sand Boa	<i>Eryx conicus</i>	NE	IV
4	Colubridae	Common Trinket Snake	<i>Coelognathus helena</i>	NE	IV
		Indian Rat Snake	<i>Ptyas mucosa</i>	NE	II
		Common Kukri Snake (Banded Kukri Snake)	<i>Oligodon arnensis</i>	NE	IV
		Russell's Kukri Snake	<i>Oligodon taeniolatus</i>	LC	IV
		Common Bronze Back Tree Snake	<i>Dendrelaphis tristis</i>	NE	IV
		Common Wolf Snake	<i>Lycodon aulicus</i>	NE	IV
		Dumeril's Black-headed Snake	<i>Sibynophis subpunctatus</i>	NE	IV
		Common Cat Snake (Indian Gamma Snake)	<i>Boiga trigonata</i>	LC	IV
		Common Green Whip Snake (Common Vine Snake)	<i>Ahaetulla nasuta</i>	NE	IV
		Brown Whip Snake (Brown Vine Snake)	<i>Ahaetulla pulverulenta</i>	LC	IV
5	Natricidae (Keelbacks)	Striped Keelback (Buff-striped Keelback)	<i>Amphiesma stolatum</i>	NE	IV
		Checkered Keelback (Asiatic Water Snake)	<i>Xenochrophis piscator</i>	NE	II
6	Elapidae	Common Indian Krait	<i>Bungarus caeruleus</i>	NE	IV
		Slender Coral Snake	<i>Calliophis melanurus</i>	NE	IV
		Indian Spectacled Cobra	<i>Naja naja naja</i>	NE	II
7	Viperidae	Russell's Viper	<i>Daboia russelii</i>	NE	II
		Common Hump-nosed Pit Viper	<i>Hypnale hypnale</i>	NE	IV

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