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**A new locality record of the king cobra
Ophiophagus hannah (Cantor, 1836) from
Western Himalayas, Himachal Pradesh, India**

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The king cobra *Ophiophagus hannah* (Cantor, 1836) is a widespread elapid snake species discontinuously distributed across South and Southeast Asia. The species is distributed throughout the Oriental tropics, subtropics and temperate areas, from Western and Eastern Ghats of Peninsular India and the Himalayan foothills of northern India (Uttarakhand), east across Northeast India to southern China and southeast across Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Peninsular Malaysia to Sumatra, Borneo, Java, Bali, and Sulawesi, with its eastern-most extent in Mindanao in the Philippines (Das, 2010; Wal-lach et al, 2014).

The king cobra is the world's longest venomous snake and grows up to 5.49-5.79 m (Aagaard, 1924; Mehrtens, 1987; Daniel, 2002). It is designated as 'Vulnerable' under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species Assessment (IUCN, 2012). Due to its wide distribution, the snake shows considerable geographic variation in colouration, size and scalation. Recent studies confirm at least four lineages of this species with unique haplotypes and morphological similarities evolving independently, which can be considered as confirmed species candidates (Shankar et al, 2021).

In the month of April 2021, an adult king cobra (Figure 1) was seen crossing the road and slithering across the soil heaps (30°30'33.1"N 77°25'08.0"E, 900 m asl) near a village called Phandi Boriwala in Sirmour district of Himachal Pradesh, which is at a linear distance of around 64 km from Dehradun, Uttarakhand. The location where the snake was seen is in the vicinity of the Girinagar forest range of Paonta forest division. The climate in the Girinagar forest range is sub-tropical monsoon with *Shorea robusta* and *Pinus roxburgii* being the dominant tree species (Bhardwaj & Kapoor 2017). Total length of the individual was estimated to be around 3 m by measuring the piece of land on which it was photographed. Sirmour district is adjacent to Uttarakhand, so the species could easily cross the boundaries of Uttarakhand and enter into the confines of Himachal Pradesh. Despite its wide distribution, the king cobra is rare

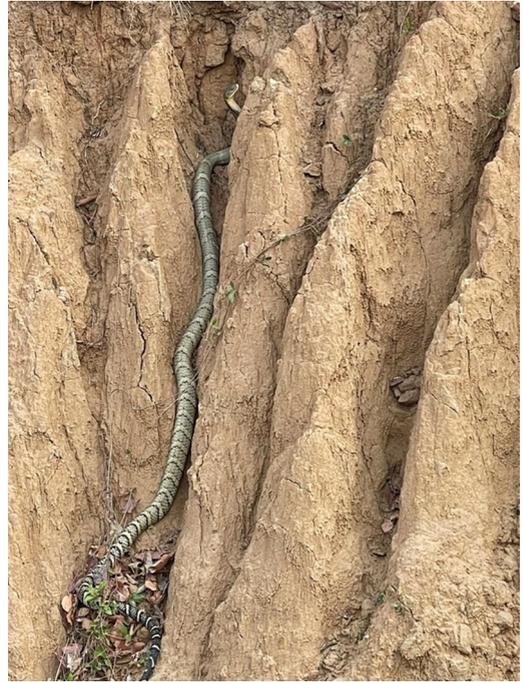


Figure 2. King cobra *Ophiophagus hannah* (Cantor, 1836) from Western Himalayas, Himachal Pradesh, India

in most parts of its range (Stuart et al. 2012) and that could be one of the reasons for this species going unnoticed so far in Himachal Pradesh, including in the parts adjacent to Uttarakhand. The species is well documented across several districts of Uttarakhand, boundaries of which coincide with Himachal Pradesh. The report presented herein constitutes a new locality record for the species and the first from Himachal Pradesh. Further surveys of the area are required to ascertain if the species is breeding in the area or the individual was a transient one.

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Contributions to the morphology and molecular phylogenetics of *Gonyosoma prasinum* (Blyth, 1854) (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae) from Mizoram, India

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The Green Trinket Snake *Gonyosoma prasinum* (Colubridae) is arboreal (Smith 1943; Das 2012) and predominantly diurnal in habit (Whitaker & Captain 2008). Individuals of *G. prasinum* have a uniformly greenish dorsum (Blyth 1854; Smith 1943; Chan-Ard et al. 2015; Das 2012). Recent work indicates that the snake is distributed in India and Myanmar (David et al. 2022) and is listed as a species of ‘Least Concern’ (Wogan et al. 2021). Within India, they are found in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and West Bengal. The snake is typically encountered in sub-montane or montane forests, near water in forest hills at elevations between 80–2650 m (Das 2012). Although distribution records are available, little else is known about the snake and no genetic data was hitherto available from India (see Blyth 1854; Smith 1943; Grossmann 2002; Whitaker & Captain 2008; Das 2012, 2018; Chan-Ard et al. 2015; Das & Das 2017). In this report, we provide morphological data of *G. prasinum* from Mizoram (Northeast India) and mitochondrial DNA sequences (*16s rRNA* and *Cyt b*). Additionally, we use the mitochondrial DNA to reconstruct a molecular phylogeny of the members of the genus *Gonyosoma*.

In this work, we documented the species from a total of 20 localities (Fig. 1), out of which the snake was known only from one locality (Mizoram University campus; Laltanpuia et al. 2008). A total of seven specimens (three males and four females) were collected from six different localities (Table 1). The morphol-