

**FIRST RECORD OF BANDED KRAIT, *BUNGARUS FASCIATUS*
(SCHNEIDER, 1801), (REPTILIA: ELAPIDAE), FROM GURU
GHASIDAS NATIONAL PARK, KORIYA DISTRICT,
CHHATTISGARH, INDIA**

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The present communication reports the occurrence of Banded Krait for the first time from Guru Ghasidas National Park (GGNP) as well as Koriya district of Chhattisgarh. This also represents the significant north western range extension of the species in Chhattisgarh. While undertaking the faunal survey of Protected Areas of Chhattisgarh, banded krait was sighted at the Amapani beat, Sonhat range (23°35'12.7", 82°29'20.7") of Guru Ghasidas National Park at night (10:30 PM) on 23rd May 2012 (Fig. 1). The snake was observed while it was crossing a narrow road from a paddy field to a water body on the opposite side. The paddy field was surrounded by dense bushes of *Lantana camara* interspersed with small bamboo patches. The site was at a distance of only 100 m from the nearby human habitation. The individual was an adult female with a length of 4 ft 3 in (1.31 m) from head to tail and weighing 1 kg and 250 gm (See Fig. 2A-2D). Considering the fact that the State has remained a part of the major State, Madhya Pradesh, two species of Krait namely, Banded Krait *Bungarus fasciatus* (Schneider, 1801) and Common Krait *Bungarus caeruleus* (Schneider, 1801), have been reported from the Central Indian landscape. In India, Common Krait is distributed throughout the country except some parts in Assam, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. Whereas, Banded Krait is mostly

restricted to the eastern part of India particularly in North-east India (Brahmaputra Basin), Andhra Pradesh (Hyderabad, Godavari valley), Central India (Chhattisgarh and parts of Madhya Pradesh), Orissa (Mahanadi valley), Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal (northern part) (Wall 1912, Kinnear 1913, Smith 1943, Sanyal 1993, Sanyal *et al.* 1993, Sharma 2003, Whitaker & Captain 2004). Both the snakes are common throughout their ranges.

Physiography of GGNP

Guru Ghasidas National Park is located in the extreme north western part of Chhattisgarh state in Koriya district. Earlier it was included in the Sanjay National Park, but after the separation of Chhattisgarh from Madhya Pradesh it was renamed and re-established on 7th August 2001. The park extends between 81°49'29.890"E to 82°44'20.117"E Longitude and 23°30'13.815" N to 23°52'16.087" N Latitude with an area of 2898.70 sq. Km. Some part of the park (30%) falls in Surguja district. The area falls in the Central highlands and Chotanagpur subdivisions of the great Deccan Peninsula biogeographic zone (Rodgers *et al.*, 2002). Being situated at the central part of the country the biodiversity of Chhattisgarh is influenced by both northern and southern elements. The state harbours several forest types like dry-deciduous, moist-deciduous,

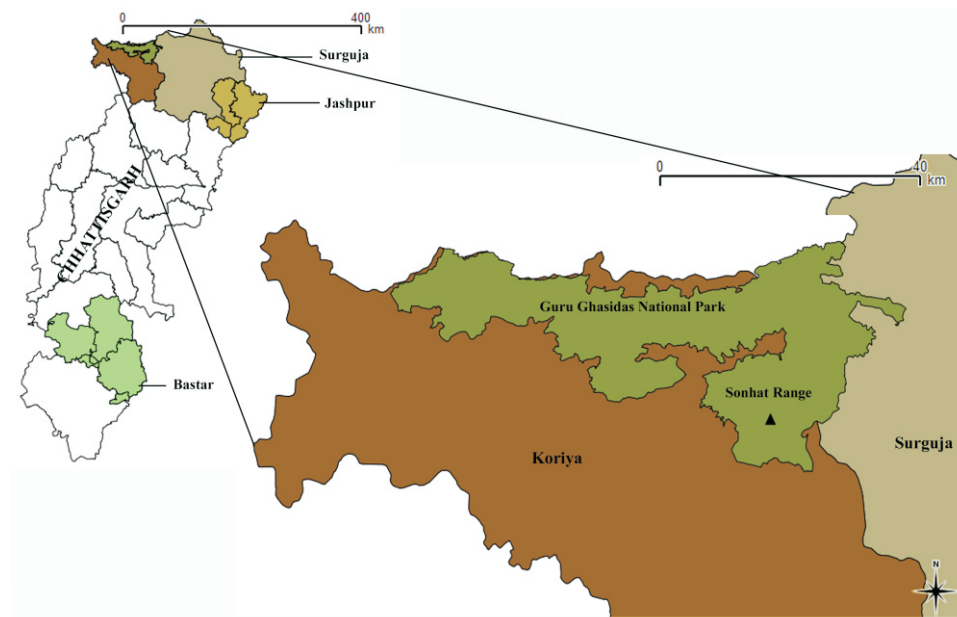


Figure 1 : Map showing the location of Guru Ghasidas National Park, Koriya and present observation site of Banded Krait (black triangular mark) and Surguja, Jashpur and Bastar districts from where the snake has been recorded in past literatures.

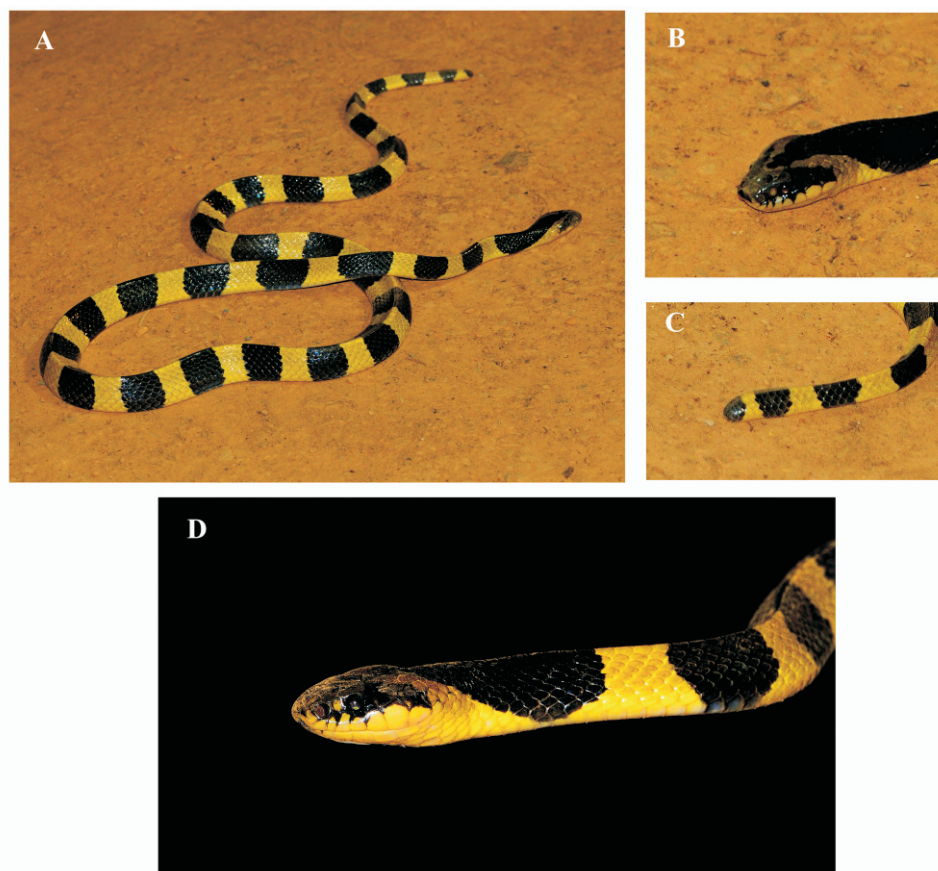


Figure 2: A - Banded Krait (*Bungarus fasciatus*) observed at Guru Ghasidas National Park; B - Head showing distinct black mark with inverted 'V' shaped yellow border; C - Blunt tail end; D - Lateral view showing head portion.

grassland, bamboo patch and small semi evergreen forests, besides certain wetland ecosystems and freshwater bodies.

Brief note on the reptiles of Chhattisgarh

As is expected not much is known about the reptile fauna of Chhattisgarh. Except few notable works, the state lacks proper documentation of its rich faunal resources. Earlier literatures on reptiles of Chhattisgarh revealed that the Banded Krait was reported from Bastar, Surguja and Jashpur districts (Agrawal 1981, Sanyal & Dasgupta 1990, Kalairasan *et al.*, 1991, Ingle 2003, Chandra & Gajbe 2005). Among Protected Areas of the state, the snake was only reported from Kanger Valley National Park (Chakraborty *et al.*, 2008). According to the survey made by Zoological Survey of India in 2008, a total of 25 reptilian species including 10 species of snakes were recorded from Guru Ghasidas National Park.

A consolidated account of the herpetology of Chhattisgarh based on a large series of samples is

the need of the hour. Sighting of Banded Krait though considered as common has become considerably rare in recent times due to anthropogenic activities like unregulated burning of forest floor by villagers. A concrete inventorisation of faunal diversity as well as effective conservation of the National Park is in immediate need before substantial portion of the fauna become extinct from the area without being scientifically surveyed, identified and documented.

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