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EXTENSION OF THE RANGE AND REDESCRIPTION OF *LYCODON JARA* (SHAW) (REPTILIA : SERPENTES : COLUBRIDAE)

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INTRODUCTION

The colubrid snake *Lycodon jara* commonly known as Yellow-speckled Wolf snake or Twin-spotted Wolf Snake was described by Russell (1796) from the specimens obtained in Ganjam, Orissa, India (Russell 1796). Subsequently the species was recorded from West Bengal and Arunachal Pradesh. There is a very interesting account of its first distributional record from Darjeeling by Wall (1909). He has stated that 'a solitary specimen was sent to me from Pashok (near to Darjeeling) an adult and I examined another in the Darjeeling museum. The labials were 8 as I usually find them (Boulenger say 9 or 10) and the 3rd, 4th and 5th touched the eye. The anterior temporal was single. The ventrals and sub-caudals 188 +66. It does not appear to have been recorded before from the Eastern Himalaya.'

Gunther (1864) reported the species as *Leptorhyaon jara*. The specimen he examined was from Anamallay mountains. According to Cantor (1839) it occurs in Assam and Bengal.

Collected on 13.iii.07, Fc.No. 10, Locality Beat no. 1, at Kalesar National Park, Haryana, India by Rizvi, A and party, Northern Regional Centre, Zoological Survey of India, DehraDun is a new distribution record. In India it is known to be distributed in Orissa (Ganjam), West Bengal and Arunachal Pradesh; the westernmost records are from Dehra Dun, Uttarakhand.

Elsewhere : It has been reported from Nepal and Bangladesh. Very little is known about this attractive snake.

The examples collected from Kalesar National Park (District : Yamuna Nagar, Haryana) and from DehraDun District (Uttarakhand) were studied in detail to find any variation from the standard description of the species (Smith 1943, Wall 1909).

METHODOLOGY

One example was collected from Kalesar National Park, District Yamuna Nagar (Haryana), three examples were collected from NRC, ZSI, campus Kaulagarh, District DehraDun (Uttarakhand) during year 2005-2007. The material was killed after collection by anaesthisising them with chloroform & then put into 5% solution of formaldehyde for fixation. After fixation for two to three days the material along with the label containing the data of collection were taken out from the solution & washed in water & then put in 90% alcohol for permanent preservation for the purpose of the study.

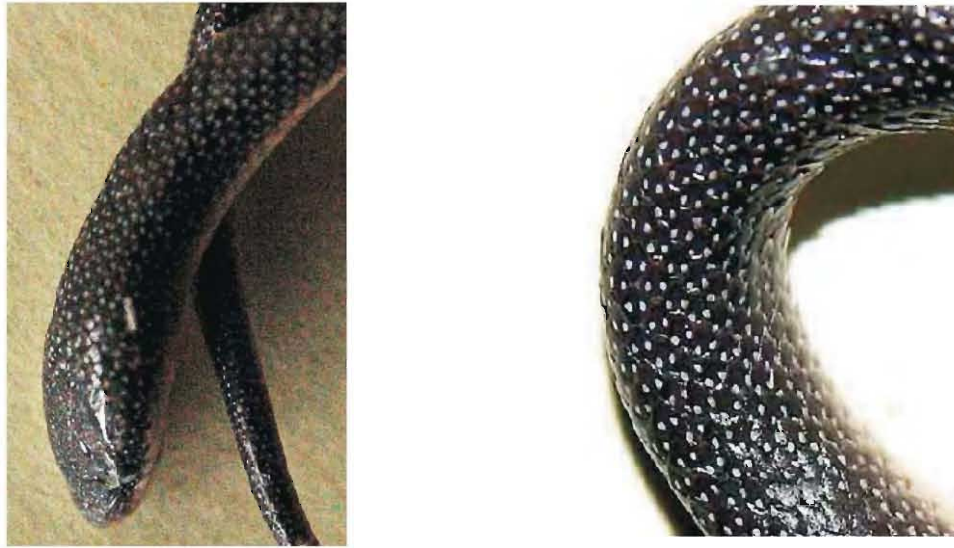
RESULT

All examples examined were slender bodied and smooth scaled. Head flattened slightly broader than neck (fig. 1), snout not projecting beyond lower jaw, eye entirely black (fig. 3) or glossy purplish black above speckled with two yellow spots (fig. 2). On the lip and belly scales were white.

Example from Kalesar National Park Reg. no. R/NRC/41 was 200 mm long with 15 rows scales dorsally (country diagonally); ventrals 159 and subcaudals, 52.

Example from DehraDun (Reg. no. R/NRC/51) was 250 mm long with 15 rows of scales dorsally (counted diagonally); ventrals 158, subcaudals, 52.

PLATE-I



Lycodon jara (Shaw) A. Head and tail; B. Twin spotted marks on dorsal surface.

Example from Dehra Dun (Reg. no. R/NRC/50) 450 mm long, thicker bodied compared to other examples, with 17 rows of scales dorsally (counted diagonally), ventrals 167 and subcaudals 52.

Example from Dehra Dun (Reg. no. R/NRC/17) 420 mm long, 17 rows of scales dorsally (counted diagonally), ventrals 164 and subcaudals 63.

In all examples studied nasals were two, preocular 1; postoculars 2; temporals 1+2, supralabials 8 (3rd to 5th touching eye).

DISCUSSION

Kalesar National Park is located 60 km away from Dehra Dun. Most of the recent records of the species are from Dehra Dun. Recently one example was collected from Kalesar National Park (District : Yamuna Nagar), Haryana by A. Rizvi and party on 13.iii.07, Fc.No.10. Locality Beat no. 1.(30/8N, 77/34E314m asl). A specimen was collected from campus of NRC, Zoological Survey of India (lex, NRC ZSI campus, Kaulagarh District Dehra Dun, coll. A. Bahuguna, on 12.v.05. Further two specimens from same locality i.e. Kaulagarh was collected by A. Bahuguna on 13.ix.06 and on 25.xi.07.

Standard description of the species : Maximum length : 550 mm. Slender bodied, smooth scaled. Flattened head slightly broader than neck. Snout does

not project beyond lower jaw. Eye entirely black. Glossy brown or purplish-black above speckled with tallow (most upper body scales have two small yellow or white spots/short lines). Lip and belly scales white or yellow collar behind head. Loreal was 1, touches internasal; preocular 1; postoculars 2; temporals 1+2 or 2+3; supralabials 8 or 9 (3rd to 5th touching eye). Scalation : Scales in 17 : 17 : 15 rows, smooth. Ventrals 167-188, not angulate laterally; anal divided; subcaudals 52-74, paired. Loreal 1, touches internasal; preocular 1; postoculars 2; temporals 1+2 or 2+3; supralabials 8 or 9 (3rd to 5th touching eye). The snake is nocturnal and eats geckos. It lays eggs.

Non-Venomous and uncommon (Smith 1943, Sharma 2003, Whitaker and Captain 2001).

Comparing the scalation of the examples studied from that of standard description it was noted that there was some variation in the number of ventrals, it was 159 in case of example from Kalesar National Park (Reg. No. R/NRS/41) and 164 ventrals counted in collection from Dehra Dun (Reg. No. R/NRS/17,51) which is below the range given (Smith 1943, Wall 1909, Sharma 2003). Temporals were in 1+2 in all examples examined. The colouration on dorsal surface was purplish with yellow speckled markings (in live), the markings changed to

white and colour of dorsal changed to black on preserving. Ventral surface was whitish. Lip scales were also white in colour. Although very little is known of the species. But this collection adds to some variations in scalation of the species from that of standard. All examples were collected from bushy areas which tend to show that the species prefers to live in bushy areas.

Conclusion : A comparative study in scalation of ventrals of species *Lycodon jara* (Shaw) collected from Haryana and hitherto recorded material by the previous authors (Gunther 1864, Wall 1909, Smith 1943) has been made.

Appendix I : 1 ex, India, Beat no. 1, Kalesar National Park, Dist. Yamuna Nagar, Haryana, 13.iii.07, Reg. no. R/NRC/41. Coll A. Rizvi and party.

1 ex., India, NRC, ZSI, campus Kaulagarh, District Dehra Dun, Uttarakhand, 12.v.05, Reg. No. R/NRS/17,

coll. A. Bahuguna; 1 ex. India, NRS, ZSI, campus, Kaulagarh, Dist. Dehra Dun, Uttarakhand, 13.ix.06, Reg. No. R/NRS/50, Coll. A. Bahuguna.; lex., India, NRS, ZSI, campus Kaulagarh, District Dehra Dun, Uttarakhand, 25.xi.07. Reg. No. R/NRS/51, Coll. A. Bahuguna.

SUMMARY

The paper reported the occurrence of the rare wolf snake, *Lycodon jara* (Shaw) in the State of Haryana, North India. In addition to the description of the species based on the material collected from Haryana, remarks on scalation, especially of the ventrals have been added.

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