



# Notes on the Southernmost Distributional Record for the Yellow-spotted Wolfsnake, *Lycodon cf. flavomaculatus* (Wall 1907), from Tamil Nadu, India

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The Yellow-spotted Wolfsnake (*Lycodon flavomaculatus*) is one of seven congeners known to occur in mainland India (Uetz et al. 2016). Boulenger (1893) considered this species to be a color variant of the Indian Wolfsnake (*Lycodon aulicus*), but Wall (1907) recognized it as a distinct species after examining the specimen collected at the type locality in Dharwad, Karnataka. He also examined five other specimens, of which four were from Sangli, Kirkee (Khadki), Poona (Pune), and Nashik in Maharashtra and one was from Faizabad in Uttar Pradesh; however, the latter was considered invalid by Wallach et al. (2014). The presence of this species in various other parts of India has been subsequently documented. Sharma et al. (2015), in a detailed discussion of locality records, supported the validity of localities at Mandla and Balaghat by providing a new record from Vidisha in Madhya Pradesh, but raised doubts about a record from Chattisgarh (Srinivasalu et al. 2014). Murthy (1991) listed a record in Tamil Nadu from the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, but Mukherjee and Bhupathy (2007) demonstrated that the specimen was a Yellow-collared Wolfsnake (*L. flavicollis*). However, Melvin Selvan [sic] et al. (2016) recently documented the presence of *L. flavomaculatus* in Tamil Nadu. Herein we provide another, even more southerly record from Tamil Nadu of an individual tentatively assigned to the same species.

At 2130 h on 15 February 2015, we found a snake (Fig. 1) that looked like a *L. flavomaculatus* in an agricultural plot near Nagalapuram in Tuticorin District (9.206138°, 78.195638°). We collected morphological and meristic data and, using a Canon Eos 600D camera, took voucher photographs for further comparisons. We counted dorsal scale rows one head length behind the neck, at approximately midbody, and one head length in front of the cloacal plate, and ventral scales per Dowling (1951) before releasing the snake at the original site of capture.

Morphology and color pattern of the snake matched characteristics of *L. flavomaculatus* (Smith 1943; Captain 1999; Whitaker and Captain 2004; Table 1). Our snake had nine supralabials, whereas the Northern Wolfsnake (*L. striatus*) has eight supralabials. Although Wall (1907) distinguished *L. flavomaculatus* and *L. striatus* based on a single supralabial touching the nasal in *L. flavomaculatus* (first two supralabials touch the nasal in *L. striatus*), Captain (1999) considered this an unstable taxonomic character inadequate for diagnosing the two species. Both of the individuals we examined (our snake and that recorded by Melvin Selvan [sic] et al. 2016) have only the first supralabial in contact with the nasal.

Nagalapuram is in southern Tamil Nadu (Fig. 2) at an elevation of about 100 m and about 55 km south of the previously recorded southernmost locality (Melvin Selvan [sic] et al. 2016). The new site is in the rainshadow on the eastern slopes of the Western Ghats and receives an annual rainfall of about 700 mm. The natural habitat in the area, dry grassland with scattered small boulders, has been largely replaced by stands



**Fig. 1.** Dorsal view of an individual tentatively identified as a Yellow-spotted Wolfsnake (*Lycodon cf. flavomaculatus*) from Nagalapuram, Tamil Nadu. Photograph by Naveen Joseph.

**Table 1.** Meristic and morphological data for Yellow-spotted Wolfsnakes (*Lycodon flavomaculatus*) listed by Captain (1999) and the individuals described in Melvinselvan [sic] et al. (2016) and herein.

Character	Source		
	Captain (1999)	Melvinselvan [sic] et al. (2016)	This work
Dorsal scale rows	17:17:15	17:17:15	17:17:15
Ventrals	165	173	161
Subcaudals	61	NA	42+ (tail broken)
Supralabials (touching eyes)	9 (3–5)	9 (3–5)	9 (3–5)
Supralabials in contact with nasal	1	1	1
Infralabials	10	10	10
Loreals	1	1	1
Preoculars	1	1	1
Postoculars	2	2	2
Temporals	2 + 3	2 + 3	2 + 3
SVL (mm)	345	192	375
Total length (cm)	95	NA	80+ (tail broken)

of Mesquite (*Prosopis juliflora*) and agriculture. Sharma et al. (2015) noted that *L. flavomaculatus* occurred in diverse habitats ranging from dry grasslands to dry deciduous forests and in areas that differ in annual rainfall from low (in most parts of the range) to high on parts of the Deccan Plateau (which composes much of peninsular India).

The Yellow-spotted Wolfsnake (*L. flavomaculatus*) was considered endemic to western and central India by Captain (1999) and Whitaker and Captain (2004), but our record and one earlier report (Melvinselvan [sic] et al. 2016) appear to demonstrate the presence of the species in Tamil Nadu. However, in the absence of molecular support and considering the apparent gap in the distribution between these new locations and the nearest previously known locality in Dharwad, we conservatively refer this individual to *L. cf. flavomaculatus*. We believe these snakes are likely to occur in a wider geographic area where habitats such as the dry grasslands and dry deciduous forests on the eastern slopes of the Western Ghats appear to be suitable.

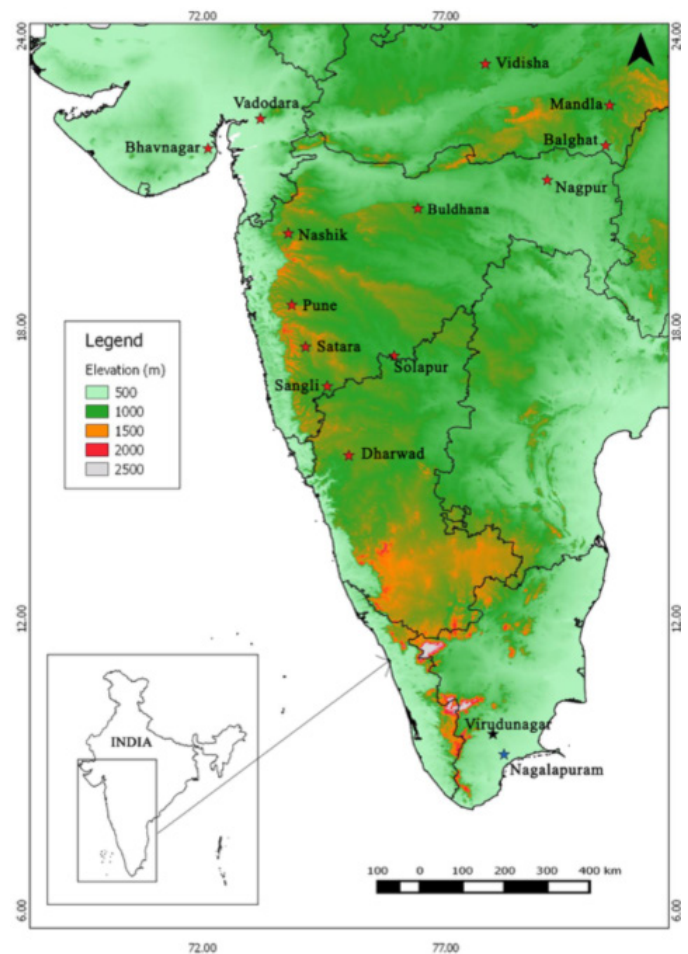
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**Fig. 2.** Distribution of the Yellow-spotted Wolfsnake (*Lycodon flavomaculatus*) in mainland India. Previously known localities are marked by red stars, the locality reported by Melvinselvan [sic] et al. (2016) is marked with a black star, and the new locality reported herein is marked with a blue star.

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