



A Rare Red Morph of a Buff-striped Keelback, *Amphiesma stolatum* (Linnaeus 1758), in Sawantwadi City, Maharashtra, India

Lalit Ghadi¹ and Kishor Shirkande²

¹Military Boys' Hostel, Sawantwadi City, Sindhudurg District, Maharashtra 416510, India (lalitghadi55@gmail.com)

²Department of Zoology, Prof. Ramkrishna More College of Science, Akurdi, Pune 411044, India (wildlife.kishor@gmail.com)

Photographs by the senior author.

Buff-striped Keelbacks (*Amphiesma stolatum*) are non-venomous natricid snakes that range throughout the Indian Subcontinent. These predominantly diurnal snakes are most frequently encountered during the rainy season (June–September) when males are searching for mates and females are laying eggs (Whitaker and Captain 2004; Pryce et al. 2016). Typical dorsal ground color of the head and body is olive-brown to gray with two chrome-yellow dorsolateral lines and a series of black crossbands; sides of the head are either yellow or white; the venter is pale yellowish or cream. During the mating season, females temporarily acquire some reddish



Fig. 1. Red color morph of a Buff-striped Keelback (*Amphiesma stolatum*) found in a small puddle in Sawantwadi City, Sindhudurg District, Maharashtra, India.



Fig. 2. The head of a red Buff-striped Keelback (*Amphiesma stolatum*) from Sawantwadi City showing characteristic scalation.

coloration around the neck. Red morphs have been encountered some 600 km to the south in Manipal (<http://manipal-blog.com/2011/09/12/manipal-snake-watch/>) and Bangalore



Fig. 3. A red Buff-striped Keelback (*Amphiesma stolatum*) from Sawantwadi City showing characteristic pattern elements.

(<http://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-buff-striped-keelback-amphiesma-sp-bangalore-india-thebuff-striped-138945068.html?pv=1&stamp=2&imageid=0CA2AF1F-BC6F-4009-8AD2-03FA2F585>), Karnataka, but we are unaware of reports of this color variant from elsewhere in India.

At about 1400 h on 4 July 2017, the senior author responded to a rescue call at the Military Boys' Hostel in Sawantwadi (15.90°N, 73.81°E, elevation 112 m), where

he found a red female Buff-striped Keelback with an olive-brown head laying in a puddle (Fig. 1). Total length was 533 mm and the snake appeared to have just eaten. Despite the unusual coloration, meristics and pattern elements (Figs. 2 & 3) were well within ranges listed by Whitaker and Captain (2004): 8 supralabials, the 3rd to 5th touching the eye, 148 (118–161) ventrals, and 77 (46–89) paired subcaudals; dorso-lateral lines (albeit red rather than yellow) and black cross-bands were present.

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Literature Cited

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