



First Locality Record for the Ladakh Cliff Racer, *Platyceps ladacensis* (Anderson 1871) from Kargil, Ladakh, India

Amjad Hussain¹ and V.T. Tantarale²

¹Kargil Campus, University of Ladakh, Saliskote, Kargil, Ladakh, India (amjadlifescience@gmail.com [corresponding author])

²Department of Zoology, Vidya Bharti Mahavidyalaya, Amravati, Maharashtra, India (vasudhawankhade@gmail.com)

Photographs by the senior author.

The Ladakh Cliff Racer (*Platyceps ladacensis*) ranges from western India through Pakistan and Afghanistan to eastern Iran and north to southern Turkmenistan, southern Uzbekistan, and western Tajikistan (Ananjeva et al. 2006; Uetz et al. 2020) with an elevational range of 350–3,700 m asl (Whitaker and Captain 2004; Schätti et al. 2014). These snakes are diurnal or crepuscular and inhabit extremely dry and rocky areas (Amr and Disi 2011).

Herein we document the first records of *Platyceps ladacensis* from Kargil District, Ladakh, India. On 7 May 2020, we found a dead female (SVL 812 mm, TL 259 mm) (Fig. 1) near an agricultural field in Gongma Minji Village (Kargil) (34°29'01.7"N, 76°05'01.3"E). On 25 May 2020, a second female (SVL 825 mm, TL 275 mm) (Fig. 2), also dead, was near the main road of the same village



Fig. 1. Details of a female Ladakh Cliff Racer (*Platyceps ladacensis*) from an agricultural field near Gongma Minji Village, Kargil District, Ladakh, India. Photographs by Amjad Hussain.



Fig. 2. Details of a female Ladakh Cliff Racer (*Platyceps ladacensis*) from the highway of Gongma Minji Village, Kargil District, Ladakh, India. Photographs by Amjad Hussain.

(34°28'42.3"N, 76°05'13.8"E). We recorded morphological data and identified the snakes based on descriptions and keys in Smith (1943), Whitaker and Captain (2004), and Schätti et al. (2014). Photographic vouchers were submitted to the Museum of Science Lab, Kargil Campus, University of Ladakh, Kargil, Ladakh, India (IMG-UOLK-1.01–2). The identity of the species was confirmed by Dr Pratyush P. Mohapatra, Zoological Survey of India, Central Zone Regional Centre, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, India.

The closest previously documented records of *Platyceps ladacensis* are at Khalsi in Leh District of Ladakh, 122 km to the northeast (Murthy and Sharma 1976; Murthy et al. 1979; Sahi 1979), and Doda in Doda District, Jammu and Kashmir, 430 km to the southwest (Manhas et al. 2018).

Acknowledgements

We thank Mr. Raza Ali, Warden of the Wildlife Department, Kargil (Ladakh), and the Wildlife Department, Ladakh, for their cooperation and support; Dr. Pratyush Mohapatra, Museum-in-Charge, Zoological Survey of India, Central Zone Regional Centre, Jabalpur, for confirming the identity of the species; and Rahul Deshmukh and Dr. Ajaz Hussain Spengkupa, Wildlife Institute of India, for guidance.

Literature Cited

Amr, Z.S. and A.M. Disi. 2011. Systematics, distribution and ecology of the snakes of Jordan. *Vertebrate Zoology* 61: 179–266.

Ananjeva, N.B., N.L. Orlov, R.G. Khalikov, I.S. Darevsky, S.A. Ryabov, and A.V. Barabanov. 2006. *The Reptiles of Northern Eurasia: Taxonomic Diversity, Distribution, Conservation Status*. Series Faunistica No. 47. Pensoft Publishers, Sofia, Bulgaria.

IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature). 2021. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. Version 2020-3. <https://www.iucnredlist.org>.

Manhas, A., R. Raina, and A. Wanganeo. 2018. Reptilian diversity and distributions in the Doda District of Jammu and Kashmir, India. *Reptiles & Amphibians* 25: 164–169.

Murthy, T.S.N. and B.D. Sharma. 1976. A contribution to the herpetology of Jammu and Kashmir. *British Journal of Herpetology* 5: 533–538.

Murthy, T.S.N., B.D. Sharma, and T. Sharma. 1979. Second report on the herpetofauna of Jammu and Kashmir. *The Snake* 11: 234–241.

Sahi, D.N. 1979. A Contribution to the Herpetology of Jammu and Kashmir. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Jammu, Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir, India.

Schätti, B., F. Tillack, and C. Kucharzewski. 2014. *Platyceps rhodorachis* (Jan, 1863) – a study of the racer genus *Platyceps* Blyth, 1860 east of the Tigris (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae). *Vertebrate Zoology* 64: 297–405.

Smith, M.A. 1943. *Fauna of British India, Ceylon and Burma, Including the Whole of the Indo-Chinese Sub-region. Reptilia and Amphibia. Volume III.-Serpentes*. Taylor and Francis, London, UK.

Uetz, P., P. Freed, and J. Hošek (eds.). 2020. *The Reptile Database*. https://reptile-database.reptarium.cz/species?genus=Platyceps&species=ladacensis&search_param=%28%28search%3D%27Platyceps+ladacensis%27%29%29.

Whitaker, R. and A. Captain. 2004. *Snakes of India, The Field Guide*. Draco Books, Chennai, India.