



First Record of the Coral Red Kukri Snake (*Oligodon kheriensis* Acharji and Ray 1936) from Bihar, India

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The 71 currently recognized species of kukri snakes in the genus *Oligodon* range collectively throughout southern and southeastern Asia (Uetz et al. 2020). The Coral Red Kukri Snake (*Oligodon kheriensis*), originally described by Acharji and Ray (1936) from the Kheri Division of Uttar Pradesh, India, is known from only a few records from Nepal (Chitwan, Jhapa) and India (Haldwani, Uttarakhand; Kheri Division, Uttar Pradesh; Jalpaiguri, West Bengal; Kokrajhar, Assam) (Schleich and Kästle 2002; Pandey 2012; Sutradhar and Nath 2013; Pandey et al. 2016, 2018; Maurya et al. 2017; Sharma 2020) (Fig. 1). Confirming the predictions of Sutradhar and Nath (2013), we herein present the first record of *O. kheriensis* from the Valmiki Tiger Reserve (VTR) in the Terai of Bihar, India.

The VTR is a 901.13-km² protected area located at the northernmost tip of Bihar (Fig. 2), where it shares an international border with Nepal and forms a continuous landscape with Chitwan National Park, Nepal. On 11 July 2019, a forest guard found and photographed a road-killed snake suspected to be *O. kheriensis* in the Madanpur Range. We subsequently

found two live snakes on 7 September 2019 (27.23830°N, 83.99458°E; 27.26242°N, 83.94460°E). On 10 October 2019, we encountered another road-killed snake (Fig. 3) on the Bagaha-Triveni Road (27.19570°N, 84.01028°E), which we collected to conduct scale counts that were congruent with descriptions in Acharji and Ray (1936), David et al. (2011), and Sutradhar and Nath (2013). We also collected tissue samples that were sent to the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, for DNA analysis (Case No. WII/WFC/O-178/2019), which confirmed the identity of the species based on sample O-178/E (S.K. Gupta, WII Lab Analysis Report, 16 October 2019). On 20 September 2020, forest staff found one live snake and two road-kills (27.23551°N, 83.98047°E; 27.24000°N, 83.99110°E; 27.42887°N, 83.90368°E), the last in the Valmiki Nagar Range (all others, like the first snake found by a forest guard, were in the Madanpur Range). All of the snakes were either in areas of mixed deciduous forest or grasslands near streams. However, the fact that four of the seven snakes found were road-kills suggests that vehicular traffic poses a risk to this species (e.g., Dutta et al. 2016).



Fig. 1. An updated distribution map of the Coral Red Kukri Snake (*Oligodon kheriensis*) in the Terai Landscape of India and Nepal. The triangle marks the type locality, dots mark other published records, and the star marks the site of the new records in the Valmiki Tiger Reserve in Bihar, India.

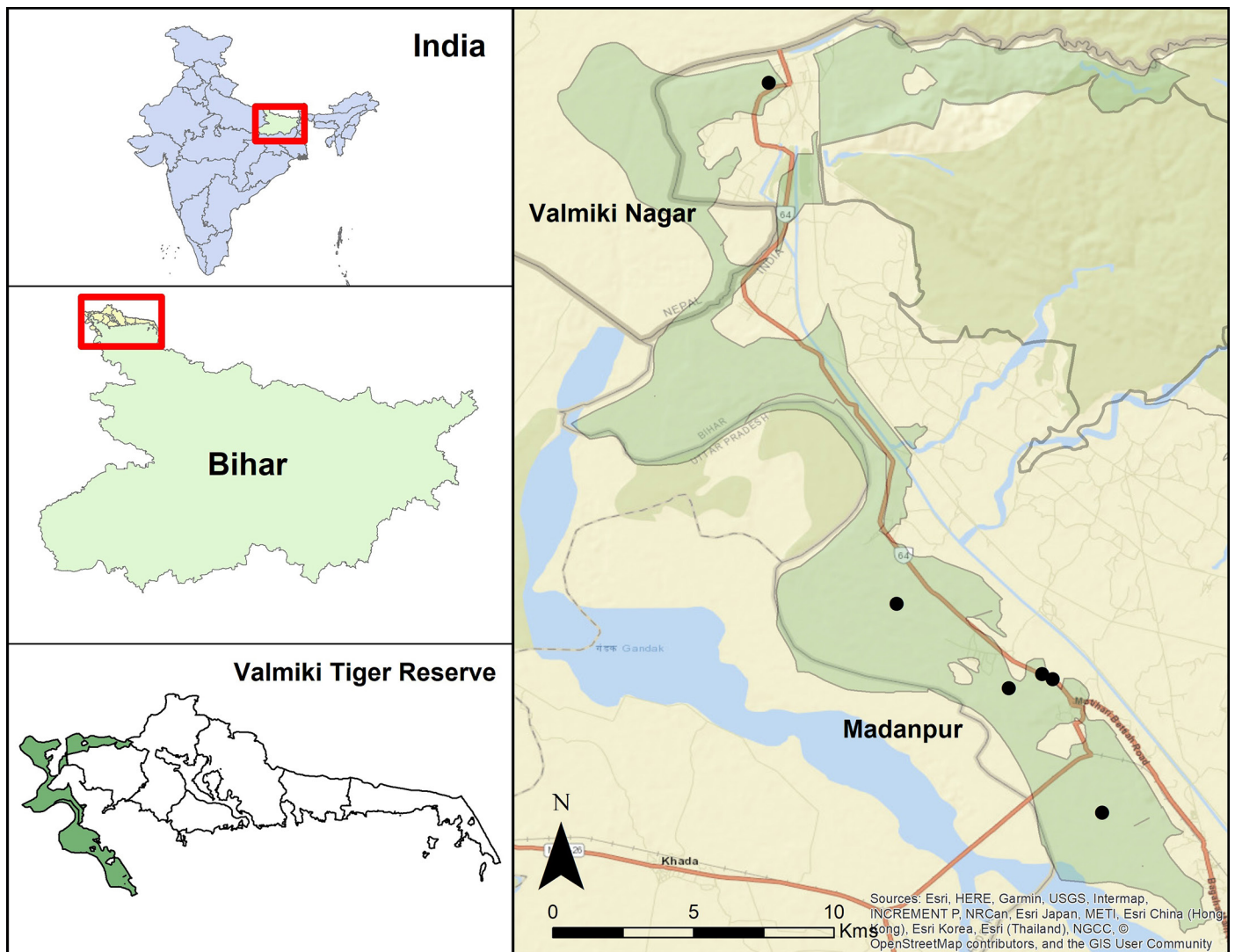


Fig. 2. Map of the Valmiki Tiger Reserve in Bihar, India. Locations where Coral Red Kukri Snakes (*Oligodon kheriensis*) were found are marked by black dots.



Fig. 3. Lateral (left) and dorsal (center) views of the head and of the posterior venter and subcaudal region (right) of a road-killed Coral Red Kukri Snake (*Oligodon kheriensis*) from the Valmiki Tiger Reserve in Bihar, India. Photographs by Sourabh Verma.

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