



# Range Expansion and a New District Record for the Laudankia Vinesnake (*Ahaetulla laudankia*) at Palghar, Maharashtra, India

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The genus *Ahaetulla* Link 1807 (family Colubridae) comprises 19 species (Mallik et al. 2020; Lam et al. 2021; Uetz et al. 2021), of which 14 have been recorded from India (Uetz et al. 2021). The Laudankia Vinesnake (*Ahaetulla laudankia*) was originally described based on three specimens from Odisha, India (Deepak et al. 2019). Additional populations since have been found in northern Rajasthan (Sengupta and Chandramouli 2020), Assam (Purkayastha et al. 2021), and the Vadodara, Chota Udaipur, and Junagadh Districts of Gujarat (Patel et al. 2019). Also, a specimen from Maharashtra was found in the vertebrate collection of the Western Regional Centre of the Zoological Survey of India

(ZSI-WRC-V) and was identified as *A. laudankia* (Narayanan and Mohapatra 2021).

Herein we report three records of *A. laudankia* from Palghar District, Maharashtra. Digital records of each individual were accessioned and assigned voucher numbers at the University of Kansas Digital Archive. At 1335 h on 28 March 2022 a live adult (total length [TL] = 579.1 mm; University of Kansas Digital Archive Number (KUDA) 013855; Fig. 1) was encountered during a rescue call (19.979063 N, 72.768008 E) and a road-killed adult (TL = 657.6 mm; KUDA 013856; Fig. 2) was found on the same day (19.993073 N, 72.741799 E). Another live adult (TL = 762 mm; KUDA 013857;



Fig. 1. A rescued Laudankia Vinesnake (*Ahaetulla laudankia*) (KUDA 013855) found on 28 March 2022 in the Palghar District, Maharashtra, India.





**Fig. 2.** Head of a road-killed Laudankia Vinesnake (*Ahaetulla laudankia*) (KUDA 013856) found on 28 March 2022 in the Palghar District, Maharashtra, India.



**Fig. 3.** A Laudankia Vinesnake (*Ahaetulla laudankia*) (KUDA 013857) found on 13 May 2022 during field surveys in Palghar District, Maharashtra, India, exhibiting defensive behavior.

Fig. 3) was found during a field survey at 0745h on 13 May 2022 (19.979016 N, 72.768042 E). Both live snakes were found in disturbed dry coastal habitats where vegetation type was dominated by creepers. Both snakes were safely released back into the wild.

We were only able to get morphological measurements from the roadkilled individuals. Measurements and diagnostic characters match those reported in previous observations (Patel et al., 2019, Narayanan and Mohapatra 2021) The measurements were: head long (length=18.80 mm) and slender (width=5.34 mm) with a long-pointed snout (eye-snout distance=8.03 mm); eye large (eye diameter=3.04 mm); eye-nostril distance equals 4.97 mm. Dorsal scale smooth; oblique counts 15:15:13. 188 gastrosteges; cloacal scale single, subcaudals 171. Head scalation: loreal absent, 8 supralabials, 7 infralabials, preocular single, 2 postoculars, and 1+2 temporals. The dorsum was light brown, the venter somewhat lighter.

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