



# First Record of the Lesser Black Krait, *Bungarus lividus* Cantor 1839, from the Mountainous Region of Nepal

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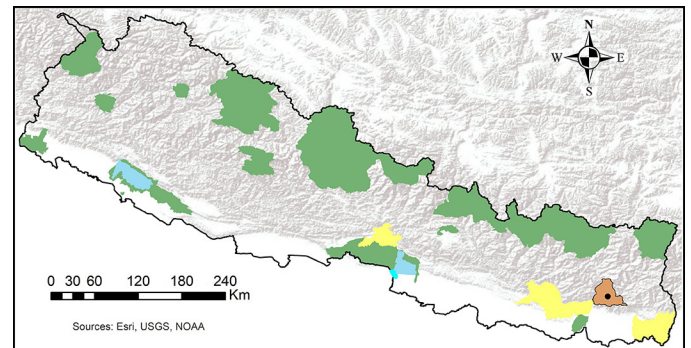
Six species of kraits in the genus *Bungarus* occur in Nepal (Schleich and Kästle 2002; Shah and Tiwari 2004; Sharma et al. 2013): *B. bungaroides* Cantor 1839, *B. caeruleus* Schneider 1801, *B. fasciatus* Schneider 1801, *B. lividus* Cantor 1839, *B. niger* Wall 1908, and *B. walli* Wall 1907. These snakes are most closely associated with the lowland habitats of the Terai Plains along the Nepal-India border, but can be found in habitats at intermediate elevations in the Siwalik Hills and the Mahabharat Range (Joshi et al. 2019) to 1,525 m asl in the case of *B. caeruleus*, the most common krait in Nepal, and to 1,730 m in the case of *B. bungaroides* (Schleich and Kästle 2002; Sharma et al. 2013).

The Lesser Black Krait (*Bungarus lividus*) is a small to medium-sized nocturnal elapid found in northern India (Boulenger 1890; Smith 1943), Nepal (Shah 1998), Bangladesh (Smith 1943; Khan 1992), and possibly Bhutan (Lenz 2012). It is typically associated with agricultural regions and open woodland areas often close to settlements at elevations under 350 m. In Nepal, this species is not common and has been reported only from the lowland Terai of Bardiya National Park, Parsa National Park, and Chitwan, Jhapa, and Udaypur Districts (Fig. 1; Table 1) (Shah and Tiwari 2004; Bhattarai et al. 2018; Rai 2019; Lohani et al. 2022). We herein report two observations of this species in the mountainous region of Dhankuta District in eastern Nepal.

At 2021 h on 7 July 2022, a snake (974 mm SVL) presumed to be either a Greater Black Krait (*B. niger*) or a Lesser Black Krait (*B. lividus*) was killed by villagers as it entered a house in Sirwani Tole, Dhankuta Municipality, Dhankuta District, Nepal (26.969919 N, 87.342350 E; elev. 1,074 m asl). The snake was preserved and identified as *B. lividus* (Fig. 2) based on descriptions in Shah and Tiwari (2004) and Kästle et al. (2013). The identity of the specimen was made by Karan Bahadur Shah and confirmed by Kul Bahadur Thapa; it was deposited in the the collection of the Central Campus of Technology, Hattisar, Dharan, Nepal (CCT-97-2022).

A juvenile (Fig. 3) of the same species was observed moving toward the kitchen of the same house at 2114 h on 15 June 2023. After photographs were taken, it was released into natural habitat far from the village. The snake was identified from photographs as a Lesser Black Krait.

This species has been confirmed from six localities in Nepal (Fig. 1; Table 1) from Bardiya National Park in the west to Jhapa District in the east. The present record at an ele-



**Figure 1.** Map of Nepal showing records of the Lesser Black Krait (*Bungarus lividus*). Green denotes protected areas, light blue marks records within protected areas, yellow indicates districts in which snakes have been recorded, and brown marks the new record described herein.

**Table 1.** Records of the Lesser Black Krait (*Bungarus lividus*) in Nepal.

| District/Protected Area | Reference             |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Dhankuta                | This study            |
| Udaypur                 | Shah and Tiwari 2004  |
| Chitwan                 | Shah and Tiwari 2004  |
| Jhapa                   | Rai 2019              |
| Bardiya National Park   | Lohani et al. 2022    |
| Parsa National Park     | Bhattarai et al. 2018 |



**Figure 2.** A Lesser Black Krait (*Bungarus lividus*) killed by villagers in Dhankuta District, Nepal. Photograph by Tujin Rai.



**Figure 3.** A juvenile Lesser Black Krait (*Bungarus lividus*) from Dhankuta District, Nepal. Photograph by Tujin Rai.

vation of 1,074 m is the highest in Nepal. Because this snake is venomous, we recommend establishing antivenom quick-treatment centers in Dhankuta Hospital and other health facilities, and conducting awareness campaigns to minimize human-snake conflicts in local communities.

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