



A Report of a White-banded Wolfsnake, *Lycodon septentrionalis* (Günther 1875) from West Bengal, India, after 114 Years

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The White-banded Wolfsnake (*Lycodon septentrionalis*) is a terrestrial, nocturnal, slender-bodied, oviparous colubrid. Previously assigned to the genus *Dinodon*, Siler et al. (2013) considered it as a junior synonym of *Lycodon*, although some authors (e.g., Das and Vasudevan 2015) continue to use the earlier name. The species' distribution includes eastern and northeastern India (northern West Bengal, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Mizoram), Bhutan, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, and China (Das and Vasudevan 2015; Das and Das 2017; Uetz et al. 2023). Das and Vasudevan (2015) considered the type locality to be doubtful, but others (e.g., Günther 1875; Daltry and Wüster 2002) listed it as the Khasi Hills, Meghalaya, northeastern India. Since its discovery, there have only been a handful of records from the country. About 19 published reports exist from the states of West Bengal, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh (Wall 1909a; Talukdar and Sanyal 1978; Ao et al. 2004; Das and Vasudevan 2015; Biakzuala et al. 2020) (Table 1). Historical records from West Bengal include two individuals, one collected by J. Gammei from Darjeeling in 1878 and one reported by Wall (1909a) from Phubsering, Darjeeling (Das and Vasudevan 2015). Although this species

has been reported since then from a few localities in north-eastern India and neighboring Bhutan (see references above; Wangyal 2011), it has not been recorded from West Bengal since 1909. Herein we report the third documented record for this elusive snake from West Bengal, India, and the first in 114 years.

At 1900 h on 31 May 2023, we encountered a single adult male *Lycodon septentrionalis* (Total length 117 cm) (Fig. 1) in the Buxa Hill Forest, Buxa Tiger Reserve, Alipurduar District, West Bengal, India (26.76161, 89.59138; elev. 797 m asl) (Fig. 2). The snake was moving along a forest path in tropical semi-evergreen and mixed broadleaf forest (Fig. 3). The northern edge of this range follows the Bhutanese border and consists of continuous forest from the plains to nearly 2,000 m asl at the border, and the forest cover probably continues at least to Tale La (4,066m asl) in Bhutan (Allen et al. 1996).

The snake was identified as *Lycodon septentrionalis* based on external characters such as a purplish black dorsum with 47 transverse narrow white crossbands (including the tail), more than the number mentioned by Smith (1943) (25–35) and Das and Vasudevan (2015) (35–43) but considerably



Figure 1. An adult male White-banded Wolfsnake (*Lycodon septentrionalis*) from the Buxa Tiger Reserve, West Bengal, India, and the head showing the scale pattern. Photographs by Avrajjal Ghosh.

Table 1. Locality records of White-banded Wolfsnakes (*Lycodon septentrionalis*) in India. State abbreviations: WB = West Bengal, AS = Assam, MI = Mizoram, NL = Nagaland, AP = Arunachal Pradesh.

Locality	References
Darjeeling (WB) 27.05964°N, 88.26862°E	J. Gammei 1878 in Das and Vasudevan 2015
Phubsering, Darjeeling District (WB) 27.07083°N, 88.27525°E	Wall 1909a
Namsang, Jeypore WLS (AS) 27.23791°N, 95.47163°E	Wall 1909b
Bhumtilong/Bungtlang (MI) 23.72972°N, 92.77944°E	Talukdar and Sanyal 1978
Kohima (NL) 25.68442°N, 94.08238°E	Ao et al. 2004
Ziro, Lower Subansiri District (AP) 27.54677°N, 93.81677°E	Das and Vasudevan 2015
Zimithang, Tawang District (AP) 27.70806°N, 91.73267°E	Das and Vasudevan 2015
Kahare Stream, Lohit District, Kamlang WLS (AP) 27.75780°N, 96.32559°E	Das and Vasudevan 2015
Sawleng (MI) 23.98172°N, 92.93219°E	Biakzuala et al. 2020
Durtlang (MI) 23.77843°N, 92.73130°E	Biakzuala et al. 2020
Chandmari West/Chanmari (MI) 23.77411°N, 92.72169°E	Biakzuala et al. 2020
Mamit Jail Road (MI) 24.04304°N, 92.61102°E	Biakzuala et al. 2020
Hunthar (MI) 23.74529°N, 92.71471°E	Biakzuala et al. 2020
Khawbung (MI) 23.16765°N, 93.21478°E	Biakzuala et al. 2020
Thenzawl (MI) 23.28275°N, 92.77303°E	Biakzuala et al. 2020
Pangzawl (MI) 23.08623°N, 92.89995°E	Biakzuala et al. 2020
Khawrihnim (MI) 23.62481°N, 92.62344°E	Biakzuala et al. 2020
Dampu/Dampui (MI) 23.81920°N, 92.48886°E	Biakzuala et al. 2020
Lower Dibang Valley (AP) 28.55959°N, 95.85129°E	https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/160014603
Lakhipathar Block (AS) 27.35445°N, 95.52147°E	https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/125330515
Eaglenest WLS (AP) 27.10397°N, 92.39802°E	https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/175881955

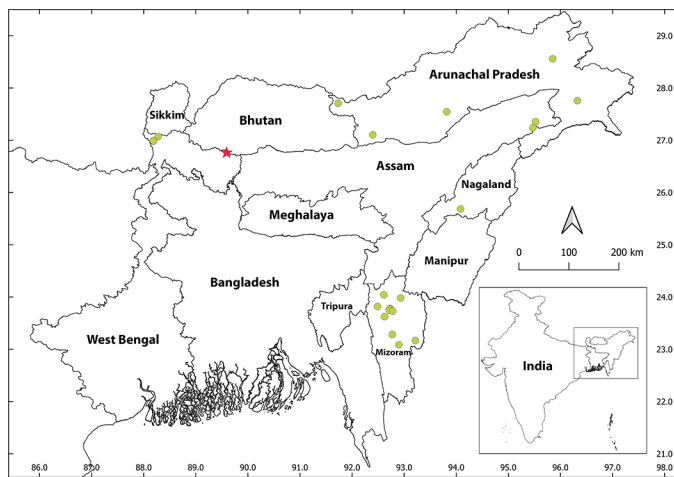


Figure 2. Map showing the distribution of White-banded Wolfsnakes (*Lycodon septentrionalis*) in India. The red star marks the new record and green dots indicate other recorded locations.

fewer than mentioned by Hallermann et al. (2002) (73). The individual had 17-17-15 scale rows; 8 supralabials (3–5 touching the eye) on both sides; 2 + 3 temporals; loreal scales well separated from the internasal; posterior nasals larger than anterior; body scales mostly smooth but the median 7 rows feebly keeled; cloacal plate entire; ventrals white mottled with black, especially from midbody to the cloaca; subcaudals divided and entirely dark. The individual was missing a small part of its tail, perhaps due to an old injury.

At the Buxa Tiger Reserve, *Lycodon septentrionalis* is sympatric with Zaw's Wolfsnake (*L. zawi*), which was reported recently from West Bengal (Ghosh et al. 2017). *Lycodon zawi*



Figure 3. Habitat where a White-banded Wolfsnake (*Lycodon septentrionalis*) was encountered in the Buxa Tiger Reserve, West Bengal, India. Photograph by Avrajjal Ghosh.

can be distinguished from *L. septentrionalis* in size (maximum total length 70 cm versus 180 cm in *L. septentrionalis*) (Das and Das 2017)] and fewer poorly developed white crossbands on a brownish-black dorsum (Slowinski et al. 2001). This is the third new record of a species of snake from the Buxa Tiger Reserve after *L. zawi* and *Boiga quincunciata* (Ghosh and Mukherjee 2019).

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