



First Record of the Beaked Wormsnake, *Grypotyphlops acutus* (Duméril and Bibron 1844), from the Union Territory of Delhi, India

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We herein present the first record of the Beaked Wormsnake (*Grypotyphlops acutus*) from Delhi, India. As part of an extensive research project on snake species in Delhi, we previously published a checklist that documented 23 species of snakes, including eight new geographical records (Barhadiya and Ghosh 2021). During recent fieldwork, a chance encounter with a Beaked Wormsnake provided a new addition to Delhi's snake fauna.

Delhi, as a diverse urban landscape, harbors a unique snake fauna. The Beaked Wormsnake, the largest typhlopoid in South Asia, is a fossorial species endemic to the Indian Subcontinent (Whitaker and Captain 2008). It is widely distributed across peninsular India (Boulenger 1890) and has been recorded from the states of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana (Dutta et al. 2009; Bhupathy and

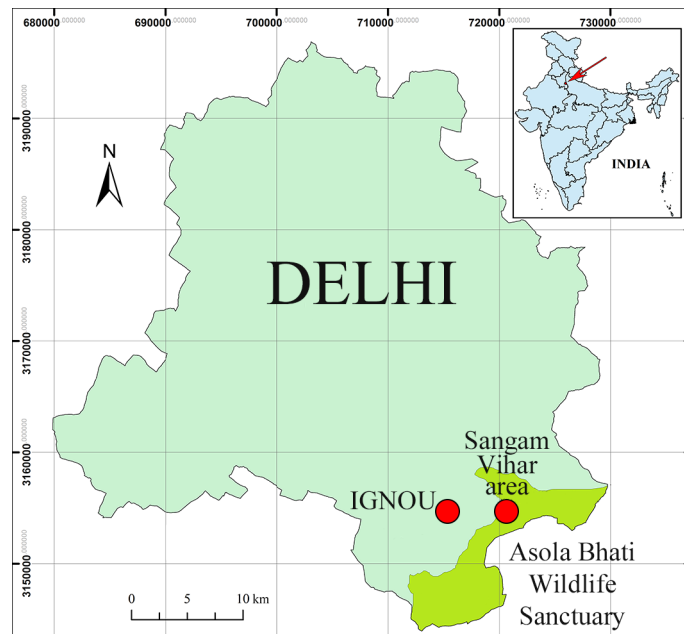


Figure 2. New records of Beaked Wormsnakes (*Grypotyphlops acutus*) (red dots) from the Union Territory of Delhi, India.



Figure 1. A Beaked Wormsnake (*Grypotyphlops acutus*) from the Sangam Vihar area in the Union Territory of Delhi, India. Photographs by Gaurav Barhadiya.

Sathishkumar 2013; Ingle et al. 2019; Deshmukh et al. 2020; Ganesh and Gupta 2021; Jigar et al. 2022; Kalki et al. 2022). The closest record of this species to that in Delhi is from the state of Haryana (Nivalkar et al. 2012), which shares a border with the Union Territory of Delhi.

We conducted field surveys throughout Delhi with permission from the Delhi Forest Department (reference to F.no. CF/LC/105/07/HQ/Part-1/10954-62), during which we encountered a Beaked Wormsnake (27 cm total length) (Fig. 1) in the Sangam Vihar area, near the Asola Bhati Wildlife Sanctuary (Fig. 2), on 25 June 2023. Additionally, another individual measuring 31 cm in total length was reported from the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) campus on 31 March 2023 (Fig. 2). The identity of both specimens was verified by Dr. Pratyush P. Mohapatra from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI).

Photographic vouchers were deposited in the Zoological Reference Collection at the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, National University of Singapore (ZRC(IMG) 2.613a–b).

The fossorial habits of the species render detection and study challenging. Its discovery in Delhi emphasizes the need for conservation efforts to protect the diverse habitats in the city, as they can serve as essential refuges for various wild-life species. The ecology of the Beaked Wormsnake is poorly known. They feed primarily on termites and ants (Whitaker and Captain 2008), which are abundant in Delhi's soils and an association with sandy or loamy substrates coincides with many regions within the city, including the IGNOU campus and areas around the wildlife sanctuary.

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