



# A Banded Kukri (*Oligodon arnensis*) (Squamata: Colubridae) with an Unusual Pattern from Pune, Maharashtra, India

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The Banded Kukri (*Oligodon arnensis*) is a non-venomous colubrid found in India and Sri Lanka (Wallach et al. 2014; Uetz et al. 2023). It is a nocturnal or crepuscular snake that shelters during the day in tree holes, termite mounds, or rocky crevices and preys on lizards, small snakes, mice, and eggs in forest, shrubland, and grassland habitats as well as modified situations like farmland or gardens; all species in this genus bear Kukri-like teeth (therefore the common name) that facilitate feeding on avian and reptilian eggs that form a major part of their diet (Whitaker and Captain 2008; Masroor et al. 2019; Das et al. 2021).

On 9 April 2024, the junior author, a permitted wild-life rescuer with extensive experience working with the Maharashtra Forest Department’s Pune Division, encountered an unusual Banded Kukri during a routine rescue call in Balewadi Gaothan, Pune, Maharashtra, India (18.576583, 73.781333). He documented the encounter with photographs (Fig. 1) before following established rescue protocols and releasing the snake into suitable nearby habitat.

Unlike typical *Oligodon arnensis* (Fig. 1), which have distinct black crossbands (Daniel 2002; Whitaker and Captain 2008), five of the bands appeared to have fused, forming a single, broad middorsal black band, with scattered small black spots present in lieu of the lateral portions of those crossbands.

Fused blotches are not uncommon pattern aberrancies, particularly in species with a blotched dorsum (Clause and Becker 2015). However, few reports document aberrant Banded Kukri Snakes (Mahabal and Thakur 2014; Thakur and Trivedi 2018; Deshmukh et al. 2020), none of which were similar to the pattern anomaly seen in the snake described herein.

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**Figure 1.** A rescued Banded Kukri (*Oligodon arnensis*) with an unusual pattern from Pune, Maharashtra, India (top), and a typically colored snake with a normal band pattern (bottom). Photographs by Rajendra Kamble.

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