



Ophidiofauna of Maharashtra: An Annotated Checklist with New Locality Records

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Abstract.—We present a checklist compiled from resources including peer-reviewed literature, citizen science portals, and internet site records of the ophidiofauna of Maharashtra, India. We documented 80 species (and two valid subspecies) in 38 genera, four species of which are new locality records for the state.

Checklists play a crucial role in understanding and conserving biodiversity, especially in Maharashtra, which has high ecological diversity and varied landscapes. They serve as baseline data that can aid future research, conservation planning, and management efforts. The fragmented nature of existing studies has made it challenging to obtain a comprehensive understanding of snake diversity across the state. By collating data from numerous studies, our checklist aims to fill significant knowledge gaps and offers a complete picture of the region’s ophidiofauna.

Although several excellent papers deal with snakes of various districts and parts of Maharashtra, we are unaware of any published paper that lists the total number of species recorded from the state. All previous studies (Wall 1923; Lindberg 1932; Fraser 1936; Daniel 1983; S. Thakur and Gour-Broome 2001; Wadatkar 2004; Khaire 2006, 2014; Nande and Deshmukh 2007; Walmiki et al. 2012a, 2012b; Raut et al. 2014; Deshmukh et al. 2015, 2020; Khobragade and Pawar 2015; Bansode et al. 2016; Pandirkar et al. 2016; Sayyed 2016; Tambre and Chavan 2016; Jadhav et al. 2018; Prabhakar et al. 2020; Gharat et al. 2021; Pardeshi et al. 2021; Chittora et al. 2022; Solanki et al. 2022; Giramkar 2023; A.N. Mirza and Patil 2023; S.V. Patel et al. 2023; Bilaskar 2024) were limited to certain parts of the state. Several new species have been described since 2015 (Gower et al. 2016; Giri et al. 2017; H. Patel et al. 2023) and new records for the state (Karthik and Dutta 2020; Narayanan and Mohapatra 2021; S.V. Patel et al. 2023) have resulted in changes in the number of species and subspecies reported from Maharashtra. Through a literature review of existing publications, citizen-science portals, and reliable photographic records, we have generated the first checklist of snakes recorded from Maharashtra, India, totaling 80 species and two subspecies.

Methods

We conducted a review of research papers and reports related to the snake diversity of Maharashtra. In addition to traditional literature sources, we used internet searches to gather information from non-peer reviewed records of snakes from different parts of the state. These included newspaper articles, photographic records and reports from citizen-science portals: iNaturalist (iNat), India Biodiversity Portal (IBP), Reptiles of India (IR), and HerpMapper (HM). For records from citizen-science platforms like iNat, we included only “research-grade” observations and/or reviewed accompanying photographs to ensure accurate identification. Additionally, known geographic ranges and habitats of each species were considered to eliminate the risk of including misidentified species. Experts (Ashok Captain, independent researcher, and Varad Giri, head scientist, Reliance Foundation) also were consulted to confirm the citizen-science records.

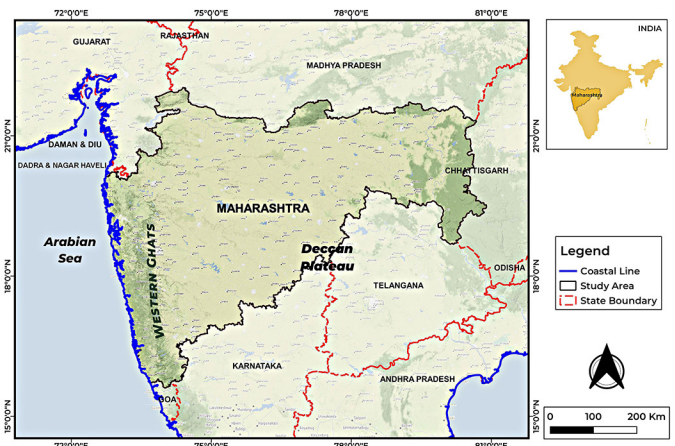


Figure 1. Map of Maharashtra, India.

We listed schedules for each species per the Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972 (Government of India Ministry of Law and Justice 2023) and conservation statuses per the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (IUCN 2023). Names of taxa cited in this study generally follow Uetz et al. (2024), although we recognize some taxa as families that are listed as subfamilies in that database.

Maharashtra (Fig. 1) is in western India between approximately 16 and 22°N and 73 and 81°E. The state features varied

topography, ranging from the lush Western Ghats in the west to the vast Deccan Plateau in the east as well as a coastline that stretches approximately 720 km along the Arabian Sea. These diverse habitats contribute to the state's rich snake diversity, which includes both endemic and widely distributed species.

The Western Ghats are characterized by tropical evergreen forests, semi-evergreen forests, and moist deciduous forests that host a diverse range of species, including the endemics Bicatinate Uropeltis (*Uropeltis bicatenata*), Malabar



Figure 2. Snakes that occur in Maharashtra, India: Brahminy Wormsnake (*Indotyphlops braminus*) (A), Bicatinate Uropeltis (*Uropeltis bicatenata*) (B), Indian Rock Python (*Python molurus*) (C), Whitaker's Boa (*Eryx whitakeri*) (D), Northern Western Ghats Keelback (*Sahyadriophis uttaraghati*) (E), and Common Catsnake (*Boiga trigonata*) (F). Photographs by Chaitanya Shukla (A, C–F) and A. Captain and S. Thakur (B).



Figure 2 (cont.). Snakes that occur in Maharashtra, India: Little File Snake (*Acrochordus granulatus*) (G), Leith's Sandsnake (*Psammophis leithii*) (H), Glossy Marsh Snake (*Gerarda prevostiana*) (I), and Hook-nosed Seasnake (*Hydrophis schistosus*) (J). Photographs by A. Captain and The Indian Herpetological Society (G, J), Chaitanya Shukla (H), and A. Captain (I).

Pitviper (*Craspedocephalus malabaricus*), and the Common Bamboo Pitviper (*Craspedocephalus gramineus*).

In contrast, the Deccan Plateau, which occupies much of central Maharashtra, comprises predominantly dry deciduous forests, thorn forests, and scrublands. This region supports species adapted to drier conditions, such as the Saw-scaled Viper (*Echis carinatus*) and the Indian Smooth Snake (*Wallophis brachyura*).

The state's coastal region is characterized by mangroves and coastal habitats, which are home to species like Gerard's Smooth Snake (*Gerarda prevostiana*).

Results

Our study presents the first comprehensive checklist of the 80 species (some depicted in Fig. 2) and two subspecies of snakes found in Maharashtra, India (Table 1), and serves as a reference for future research and conservation efforts in the region. The checklist also includes four new locality records (Table 2) based on published data, museum specimens, and records gleaned from citizen-science portals: Ornate Flying Snake (*Chrysopelea ornata*) (Fig. 3A), Hump-nosed Pitviper (*Hypnale hypnale*) (Fig. 3B), Russell's Wolfsnake (*Lycodon fasci-*

olatus) (Fig. 3C), and Yellow-collared Wolfsnake (*Lycodon flavicollis*) (Fig. 3D). The Banded Seasnake (*Hydrophis fasciatus*), Ornate Reef Seasnake (*Hydrophis ornatus*), Stokes' Seasnake (*Hydrophis stokesii*), and Viperine Seasnake (*Hydrophis viperinus*) are included in our checklist based solely on images available on citizen-science portals, without scalation data or actual specimens. More observations are needed to conclusively confirm their occurrence in the state.

Discussion

Our checklist fills knowledge gaps by collating data from multiple sources and thus offers a more nuanced understanding of snake biodiversity in Maharashtra. Although the peer-reviewed literature provides rigorously vetted data, non-peer-reviewed sources have proven invaluable in contributing additional observations that have not been documented in academic publications. Our checklist bridges this gap by verifying and listing non-peer-reviewed records.

In addition, our study suggests that future herpetological work in Maharashtra should consider a multi-faceted approach, incorporating both traditional field studies and citizen-science initiatives along with other scientific studies. By encouraging



Figure 2 (cont.). Snakes that occur in Maharashtra, India: Spectacled Cobra (*Naja naja*) (K), Common Krait (*Bungarus caeruleus*) (L), and Slender Coralsnake (*Calliophis melanurus*) (M). Photographs by A. Captain and The Indian Herpetological Society (K, M) and Chaitanya Shukla (L).



Figure 2 (cont.). Snakes that occur in Maharashtra, India: Saw-scaled Viper (*Echis carinatus*) (N) and Russel's Viper (*Daboia russelii*) (O). Photographs by Chaitanya Shukla.

public participation in biodiversity documentation, the geographic and temporal scope of data collection can be expanded. However, this approach must be complemented by rigorous verification processes to ensure the accuracy and reliability of data collected. Ultimately, our checklist serves not only as a resource for ongoing research but also as a call to action for

more integrated and collaborative efforts in the study and conservation of Maharashtra's rich snake biodiversity.

Acknowledgements

We are deeply appreciative of the numerous individuals and organizations who have contributed to herpetological

Table 1. Checklist of snakes of Maharashtra, India, with documented occurrences and conservation status. BNHS = The Bombay Natural History Society (museum numbers). WPA = The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 (schedule) (Government of India Ministry of Law and Justice 2023). IUCN = The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (status: LC = Least Concern, NT = Near Threatened, VU = Vulnerable, EN = Endangered, DD = Data Deficient) (IUCN 2023).

Taxon	Source	WPA	IUCN
Typhlopidae			
1. Beaked Wormsnake <i>Grypotyphlops acutus</i> (Duméril and Bibron 1844)	Deshmukh et al. 2020	II	LC
2. Brahminy Wormsnake <i>Indotyphlops braminus</i> (Daudin 1803)	Deshmukh et al. 2020	II	LC
3. Slender Wormsnake <i>Pseudoindotyphlops</i> (prev. <i>Indotyphlops</i>) <i>porrectus</i> (Stoliczka 1871)	Deshmukh et al. 2020; Sidharthan et al. 2024	II	LC
Uropeltidae			
4. Khaire's Black Shieldtail <i>Melanophidium khairi</i> Gower et al. 2016	Gower et al. 2016	II	EN
5. Bicatinate Uropeltis <i>Uropeltis bicatenata</i> (Günther 1864)	Gower et al. 2008	II	NT
6. Elliot's Shieldtail <i>Uropeltis ellioti</i> (Gray 1858)	Wadatkar and Chikhale 2010	II	LC
7. Large-scaled Shieldtail <i>Uropeltis macrolepis</i> (Peters 1862)	Beddome 1886; Bansode and More 2018	II	LC
8. Phipson's Shieldtail <i>Uropeltis phipsonii</i> (Mason 1888)	Yadav et al. 2014; Pyron et al. 2016	II	VU
Pythonidae			
9. Indian Rock Python <i>Python molurus</i> (Linnaeus 1758)	P.S. Thakur 2018	II	NT
Erycidae			
10. Common Sandboa <i>Eryx conicus</i> (Schneider 1801)	Gharat et al. 2021	II	NT
11. Red Sandboa <i>Eryx johnii</i> (Russell 1801)	Nande and Deshmukh 2007	I	NT
12. Whitaker's Boa <i>Eryx whitakeri</i> Das 1991	Captain et al. 2009	I	NT
Acrochordidae			
13. Little File Snake <i>Acrochordus granulatus</i> (Schneider 1799)	Smith 1943	II	LC
Ahaetuliidae			
14. Northern Western Ghats Vinesnake <i>Ahaetulla borealis</i> Mallik et al. 2020	Mallik et al. 2020	II	DD
15. Laudankia Vinesnake <i>Ahaetulla laudankia</i> Deepak et al. 2019	Deepak et al. 2019; Narayanan and Mohapatra 2021	II	LC
16. Long-nosed Vinesnake <i>Ahaetulla oxyrhynca</i> (Bell 1825)	Mallik et al. 2020; David et al. 2022	II	DD
17. Sahyadri Vinesnake <i>Ahaetulla sahyadrensis</i> Mallik et al. 2020	Mallik et al. 2020; Narayanan and Mohapatra 2021	II	DD
18. Ornate Flying Snake <i>Chrysopelea ornata</i> (Shaw 1802)	Bhise 2020; Vaze 2020; Wild India Expeditions 2024	II	LC
19. Karnataka Bronzeback <i>Dendrelaphis chairecacos</i> (Boie 1827)	Karthik and Dutta 2020	II	DD

20.	Giri's Bronze-backed Treesnake <i>Dendrelaphis giri</i> Vogel and Van Rooijen 2011	Vogel and Van Rooijen 2011	II	LC
21.	Common Bronze-backed Treesnake <i>Dendrelaphis tristis</i> (Daudin 1803)	Sawant and Temkar 2018; Gharat et al. 2021	II	LC
Colubridae				
22.	Beddome's Catsnake <i>Boiga beddomei</i> (Wall 1909)	Solanki et al. 2022	II	DD
23.	Yellow-green Catsnake <i>Boiga flaviviridis</i> Vogel and Ganesh 2013	Sharma et al. 2016	II	LC
24.	Forsten's Catsnake <i>Boiga forsteni</i> (Duméril, Bibron, and Duméril 1854)	Gharat et al. 2021	II	LC
25.	Thackeray's Catsnake <i>Boiga thackerayi</i> Giri et al. 2019	Giri et al. 2019	II	DD
26.	Common Catsnake <i>Boiga trigonata</i> (Schneider 1802)	Pardeshi et al. 2021	II	LC
27.	Indian Egg-eater <i>Boiga westermanni</i> (Reinhardt 1863)	Captain et al. 2005; Dandge and Tiple 2016	I	LC
28.	Common Trinket Snake <i>Coelognathus helena helena</i> (Daudin 1803)	Pardeshi et al. 2021	II	LC
29.	Montane Trinket Snake <i>Coelognathus helena monticollaris</i> (Schulz 1992)	Gharat et al. 2021	II	LC
30.	Arrow-headed Trinket Snake <i>Coelognathus helena nigriangularis</i> (Mohapatra et al. 2016)	Ashaharraza and Bibekar 2019	II	DD
31.	Lesser Stripe-necked Snake <i>Liopeltis calamaria</i> (Günther 1858)	Chunekar and Alekar 2015	II	LC
32.	Common Wolfsnake <i>Lycodon aulicus</i> (Linnaeus 1758)	Deshmukh et al. 2020; Solanki et al. 2022	II	LC
33.	Russell's Wolfsnake <i>Lycodon fasciolatus</i> (Shaw 1802) ¹	Ganesh and Vogel 2018; Chavan 2020; Deepak et al. 2021; Joshi 2021; Pise 2024; Shirodkar 2024	II	LC
34.	Yellow-collared Wolfsnake <i>Lycodon flavicollis</i> Mukherjee and Bhupathy 2007	Sharma 2013; Abhishek 2020; Das 2023	II	LC
35.	Yellow-spotted Wolfsnake <i>Lycodon flavomaculatus</i> Wall 1907	Captain 1999; Walmiki et al. 2011	II	LC
36.	Barred Wolfsnake <i>Lycodon striatus</i> (Shaw 1802)	Deshmukh et al. 2020	II	LC
37.	Travancore Wolfsnake <i>Lycodon travancoricus</i> (Beddome 1870)	S. Thakur and Gour-Broome 2001	II	LC
38.	Russell's Kukri Snake <i>Oligodon russelius</i> (Daudin 1803)	Bandara et al. 2022	I	DD
39.	Streaked Kukri Snake <i>Oligodon taeniolatus</i> (Jerdon 1853)	Nande and Deshmukh 2007	II	LC
40.	Tillack's Kukri Snake <i>Oligodon tillacki</i> Bandara et al. 2022	Bandara et al. 2022; Solanki and Khare 2023	II	DD
41.	Slender Racer <i>Platyceps gracilis</i> (Günther 1862)	Whitaker and Captain 2004; Ashaharraza 2017	II	DD
42.	Banded Racer <i>Platyceps plinii</i> (Merrem 1820)	Deepak et al. 2021	II	LC
43.	Indian Ratsnake <i>Ptyas mucosa</i> (Linnaeus 1758)	Gharat et al. 2021	I	LC
44.	Indian Smooth Snake <i>Wallophis brachyura</i> (Günther 1866) ²	Lindberg 1932; Z.A. Mirza and Patel 2018	II	LC

Homalopsidae

45. Dog-faced Watersnake <i>Cerberus rynchops</i> (Schneider 1799)	Smith 1943; Whitaker and Captain 2004	I	LC
46. Glossy Marsh Snake <i>Gerarda prevostiana</i> (Eyndoux and Gervais 1837)	Whitaker and Captain 2004; Vyas and Sethna 2022	II	LC

Natricidae

47. Striped Keelback <i>Amphiesma stolatum</i> (Linnaeus 1758)	Deshmukh et al. 2020	II	LC
48. Olive Keelback <i>Atretium schistosum</i> (Daudin 1803)	Deshmukh et al. 2020	I	LC
49. Checkered Keelback <i>Fowlea piscator</i> (Schneider 1799)	Solanki et al. 2022	I	LC
50. Green Keelback <i>Rhabdophis plumbicolor</i> (Cantor 1839)	Nande and Deshmukh 2007	II	LC
51. Water Rhabdops / Aquatic Rhabdops <i>Rhabdops aquaticus</i> Giri et al. 2017	Giri et al. 2017	II	LC
52. Northern Western Ghats Keelback <i>Sahyadriophis uttaraghati</i> Patel et al. 2023 ³	Shinde et al. 2020; H. Patel et al. 2023	II	LC

Psammophiidae

53. Condanarus Sandsnake <i>Psammophis condanarus</i> (Merrem 1820)	Joshi et al. 2015 P.S. Thakur 2018	II	LC
54. Leith's Sandsnake <i>Psammophis leithii</i> Günther 1869	Smith 1943; Whitaker and Captain 2004	II	LC
55. Stout Sandsnake <i>Psammophis longifrons</i> Boulenger 1890	Joshi 2011; Prabhakar et al. 2020	II	LC

Sibynophiidae

56. Duméril's Black-headed Snake <i>Sibynophis subpunctatus</i> (Duméril, Bibron, and Duméril 1854)	S. Thakur 1998; Captain et al. 2004	II	LC
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Elapidae

57. Common Krait <i>Bungarus caeruleus</i> (Schneider 1801)	Sirsat et al. 2016	II	LC
58. Banded Krait <i>Bungarus fasciatus</i> (Schneider 1801)	Bhandarkar et al. 2012	II	LC
59. Sind Krait <i>Bungarus sindanus</i> Boulenger 1897 ⁴	Joshi et al. 2017	II	LC
60. Castoe's Coralsnake <i>Calliophis castoe</i> Smith et al. 2012	Satose et al. 2022; Parab et al. 2024	II	EN
61. Slender Coralsnake <i>Calliophis melanurus</i> (Shaw 1802)	Kininge et al. 2020; Pawar et al. 2020	II	LC
62. Striped Coralsnake <i>Calliophis nigrescens</i> (Günther 1862)	Whitaker and Captain 2004; Pardeshi et al. 2021	II	LC
63. Spectacled Cobra <i>Naja naja</i> (Linnaeus 1758)	Thakkar et al. 2023	I	LC
64. King Cobra <i>Ophiophagus hannah</i> (Cantor 1836)	Yadav and Yankanchi 2015	I	VU

Hydrophiidae

65. Dwarf Seasnake <i>Hydrophis caeruleus</i> (Shaw 1802)	D'Souza et al. 2021; Rao et al. 2021	II	LC
66. Short Seasnake <i>Hydrophis curtus</i> (Shaw 1802)	D'Souza et al. 2021; Rao et al. 2021	II	EN
67. Blue-banded Seasnake <i>Hydrophis cyanocinctus</i> Daudin 1803	D'Souza et al. 2021	II	LC

68. Banded Seasnake <i>Hydrophis fasciatus</i> (Schneider 1799) ⁵	Fulmali 2020	II	LC
69. Jerdon's Seasnake <i>Hydrophis jerdonii</i> (Gray 1849) ⁶	Whitaker and Captain 2004	II	DD
70. Bombay Broad-banded Seasnake <i>Hydrophis mamillaris</i> (Daudin 1803)	Wall 1921; BNHS 2329	II	DD
71. Ornate Reef Seasnake <i>Hydrophis ornatus</i> (Gray 1842) ⁵	Anonymous 2024	II	LC
72. Yellow-bellied Seasnake <i>Hydrophis platurus</i> (Linnaeus 1766)	BNHS 2376; 2378; 2380–3; 2825; 2992	II	LC
73. Hook-nosed Seasnake <i>Hydrophis schistosus</i> (Daudin 1803)	D'Souza et al. 2021; Rao et al. 2021; BNHS 2291–2; 2295	II	LC
74. Yellow Seasnake <i>Hydrophis spiralis</i> (Shaw 1802)	BNHS 2353, 2356	II	LC
75. Stokes' Seasnake <i>Hydrophis stokesii</i> (Gray 1846) ⁵	Luis 2018	II	LC
76. Viperine Seasnake <i>Hydrophis viperinus</i> (Schmidt 1852) ⁵	Rao 2017	II	LC
77. Common Small-headed Seasnake <i>Hydrophis</i> (prev. <i>Microcephalophis</i>) <i>gracilis</i> (Shaw 1802)	BNHS 2367–8	II	LC
Viperidae			
78. Common Bamboo Pitviper <i>Craspedocephalus</i> (prev. <i>Trimeresurus</i>) <i>gramineus</i> (Shaw 1802)	Yadav and Yankanchi 2014; Mukadam and Kadam 2016	II	LC
79. Malabar Pitviper <i>Craspedocephalus malabaricus</i> (Jerdon 1854)	S. Thakur 1998; Whitaker and Captain 2004	II	LC
80. Russel's Viper <i>Daboia russelii</i> (Shaw and Nodder 1797)	Hussain et al. 2019; Chaudhari and Ishi 2022	I	LC
81. Saw-scaled Viper <i>Echis carinatus</i> (Schneider 1801)	Sengupta et al. 1994; Joshi 2011	II	LC
82. Hump-nosed Pitviper <i>Hypnale hypnale</i> (Merrem 1820)	Sawant 2022; Kumar 2024	II	LC

¹*Lycodon anamallensis* (Ganesh and Vogel 2018) is now considered to be a junior synonym of *Lycodon fasciolatus* (Deepak et al. 2021). Although Ganesh and Vogel (2018) did not explicitly report this species from Maharashtra, they stated: "As currently understood, *L. anamallensis* is known to occur in peninsular India (roughly as far north as 21°N) and Sri Lanka," and this includes northern Maharashtra.

²*Coronella brachyura* was reassigned to *Wallophis brachyura* by Mirza and Patel (2017).

³Shinde et al. (2020) recorded this species as *Hebius beddomei*, since then H. Patel et al. (2023) reassigned it to *Sahyadriophis uttaraghati*.

⁴*Bungarus caeruleus* has 15 midbody dorsal scale rows, whereas *Bungarus sindanus walli* (i.e., *Bungarus sindanus* or *Bungarus walli*) has 17 midbody dorsal scale rows. Taxonomists disagree regarding the identity of the taxa with 17 dorsal scale rows in Maharashtra; some consider them to be subspecies (*Bungarus sindanus sindanus* or *Bungarus sindanus walli*), whereas others consider them to be valid species (*Bungarus sindanus* or *Bungarus walli*). Pending genetic confirmation, we tentatively assign the snakes with 17 dorsal scale rows from Maharashtra to *Bungarus sindanus* Boulenger 1897.

⁵Record based solely on a photograph that requires further confirmation.

⁶The distribution map in Whitaker and Captain (2004) shows the distribution of this species along the entire coast of India, but our search of museum specimens (Bombay Natural History Society and Natural History Museum, London) as well as citizen-science portals show no records along the coast of Maharashtra. We tentatively include this species in our checklist but await confirmed locality records from the state.

Table 2. New records of snakes from Maharashtra, India, with GPS coordinates of reported localities.

Species	Coordinates
Ornate Flying Snake (<i>Chrysopelea ornata</i>)	15.9343, 73.9385; 15.8126, 74.0964; 15.6311, 74.0209
Hump-nosed Pitviper (<i>Hypnale hypnale</i>)	15.7894, 74.1577; 15.6841, 73.9764; 15.7785, 74.0271
Russell's Wolfsnake (<i>Lycodon fasciolatus</i>)	16.9664, 73.3094; 19.2094, 73.0940; 19.0025, 72.8617; 19.1629, 72.8920
Yellow-collared Wolfsnake (<i>Lycodon flavicollis</i>)	15.9026, 74.3844; 21.6165, 79.1458; 20.2479, 79.3607; 20.7453, 78.6022

**Figure 3.** New records of snakes in Maharashtra, India: Ornate Flying Snake (*Chrysopelea ornata*) (A); Hump-nosed Pitviper (*Hypnale hypnale*) (B); Russell's Wolfsnake (*Lycodon fasciolatus*) (C); Yellow-collared Wolfsnake (*Lycodon flavicollis*) (D). Photographs by Vinayak Puranik (A, C, D) and Shashank Raul (B).

research, citizen-science initiatives, and other platforms dedicated to recording biodiversity observations. Their collective contributions have been the basis of our study. In particular, we extend our appreciation to Shawn D'Souza for the generous contribution of his research data and Ashok Captain for his guidance throughout the development of this manuscript and the generous use of his images.

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