



First Record of the Dog-faced Watersnake (*Cerberus rynchops*) from Northeast India

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The Dog-faced Watersnake, *Cerberus rynchops* (Schneider 1799), is a rear-fanged, mildly venomous, semi-aquatic snake that predominantly inhabits mangroves, coastal mudflats, and estuarine habitats across Southeast Asia and south to northern Australia (Murphy et al. 2012). The species is well-adapted to brackish water and is known to hunt for fish and crustaceans in shallow waters, using a sit-and-wait predatory strategy (Karns et al. 2002).

Although *Cerberus rynchops* has been recorded along Indian coastal regions in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Vyas et al. 2013; Parmar 2019; Uetz et al. 2024), inland records are rare. We herein provide the first record of the species from Assam in Northeast India.

At about 1900 h on 21 October 2024, we observed five *Cerberus rynchops* at Garemara, Nalbari District, Assam (26.480987, 91.463118; Fig. 1). Habitat was a floodplain

along a slow-moving stream, indicating the ability of the species to exploit freshwater environments. We collected data from one of the five individuals, a male that measured 820 mm in total length. Scale counts were: 154 ventrals, 61 subcaudals, and dorsal scales in 27:25:19 rows, all of which fall within the known range for the species (Murphy et al. 2012; Rahman and Reza 2013). A photograph was deposited in the University of Kansas Digital Archive (KUDA 14691) and the identity of the species was independently verified by Sanath Bohra.

This record, approximately 800 km from the nearest coast at Sonadia Island, Chittagong Division, Bangladesh (Rahman and Reza 2013; Fig. 2), is particularly intriguing as the species is predominantly associated with coastal ecosystems (Vyas et al. 2013; Parmar 2019). Further studies of the species' dispersal pathways and ecological adaptability could provide valuable insights into its ability to exploit habitats beyond its typical range.



Figure 1. A Dog-faced Watersnake (*Cerberus rynchops*) observed at Garemara, Nalbari District, Assam, India. Photograph by Prasanna Kalita.

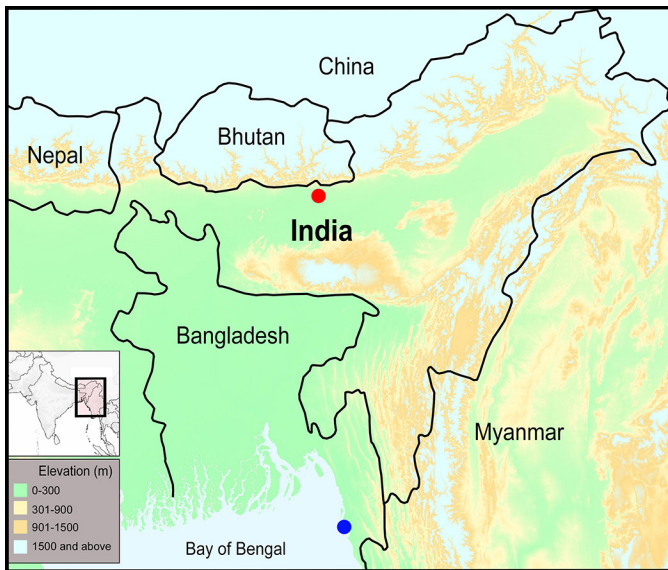


Figure 2. A map showing the current record of Dog-faced Watersnake (*Cerberus rynchops*) from Garemara, Nalbari District, Assam (red dot) and the nearest locality record of the species from Sonadia Island, Chittagong Division, Bangladesh (blue dot).

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