



King Cobras, *Ophiophagus hannah* (Cantor 1836), from Lumding, Hojai District, Assam, India

Bappi Majumder¹, Mathuranath Dey², Sanath Chandra Bohra³, Jayaditya Purkayastha³

¹New Colony, Lumding 782447, Assam, India

²Adagudam, Lalganesh, Guwahati 781034, Assam, India

³Help Earth, Raghunath Choudhury Path, Lachitnagar, Guwahati 781007, Assam, India (mail.jayaditya@gmail.com)

The King Cobra, *Ophiophagus hannah* Cantor 1836, is an actively foraging, diurnally active snake that inhabits a wide range of habitats including shrublands, wetlands, mangroves, swamps, grassland, forests, agricultural areas, and the outskirts of rural villages (Whitaker and Captain 2004; Stuart et al. 2012). Its distribution includes countries throughout southern and southeastern Asia (Stuart et al. 2012).

In India, the species is known to occur in the southern, northern, eastern and northeastern states of the country (Whitaker and Captain 2004; Yadav and Yankanchi 2015; Waltner 1975; Rasaily et al. 2008; Theophilus et al. 2008; Singh and Joshi 2016; Stuart et al. 2012; Das et al. 2008; Hrima et al. 2014), and in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands situated in the Bay of Bengal (Smith 1943; Whitaker and Captain 2004).

Ophiophagus hannah has been recorded in the following localities in Assam (northeastern India): Dibrugarh, Tezpur, Margherita, Garbhanga Reserve Forest, Kulsi River side of Kamrup District; Bansbari, Kasimdaha, Kuribeel grassland of Manas National Park; Kaziranga National Park (KNP); Panbari RF; Lakhojan Tea Estate; Nambor Wildlife Sanctuary; Dibru Saikhowa National Park; Kakojan RF (Duarmara side); Nameri Tiger Reserve; and North Cachar Hills (Das et. al 2008; Mathew 1983; Sengupta et al. 2000; Wall 1909,1910). Unfortunately, these elapids are declining drastically due to habitat loss caused by cultivation and logging of remaining patches of forest (Das et. al 2008).

Herein, we report the occurrence and distribution of *Ophiophagus hannah* in Lumding, Hojai District, Assam (Fig. 1), based on data collected during the course of rescues and translocations of individuals from various sites between November 2017 and December 2021. Lumding is surrounded by forest on all sides, with the North Cachar Hills on the southern side and the Karbi Plateau on the northwestern side. Habitat within the region primarily consists of moist

deciduous and disturbed degraded hill forests (mid-elevation regions) in association with small streams and mossy rocks in close proximity to human habitations (mean elevation ca. 100 m asl).

A total of 27 live individuals (Fig. 2) were rescued from in and around human habitations in the vicinity of Lumding over a number of years. Most were observed during the day, particularly between 0830 h and 1700 h (Table 1), and often were rescued from inside houses. Most of the rescues were carried out in the Hatikhuli area. According to our data, females (20) were rescued more frequently than males (7) (Table 1).

Such sightings indicate an abundance of King Cobras in and around Lumding. A detailed survey in adjacent forests could help us estimate the status of the local population of this vulnerable species and identify its preferred microhabitats.

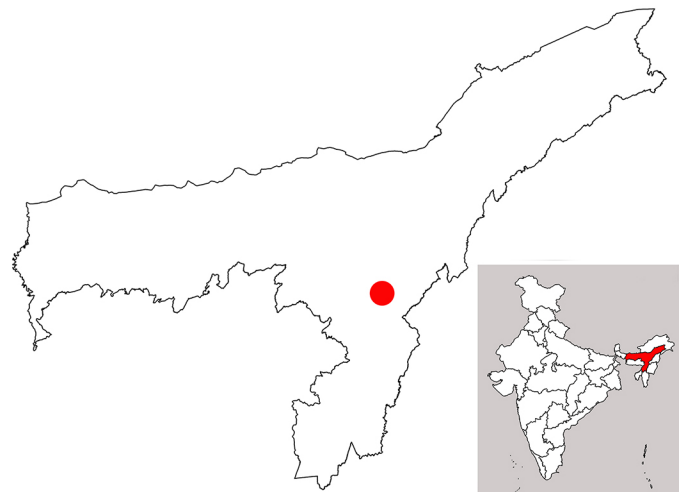


Fig. 1. Map of Assam showing the location of Lumding (solid red circle).

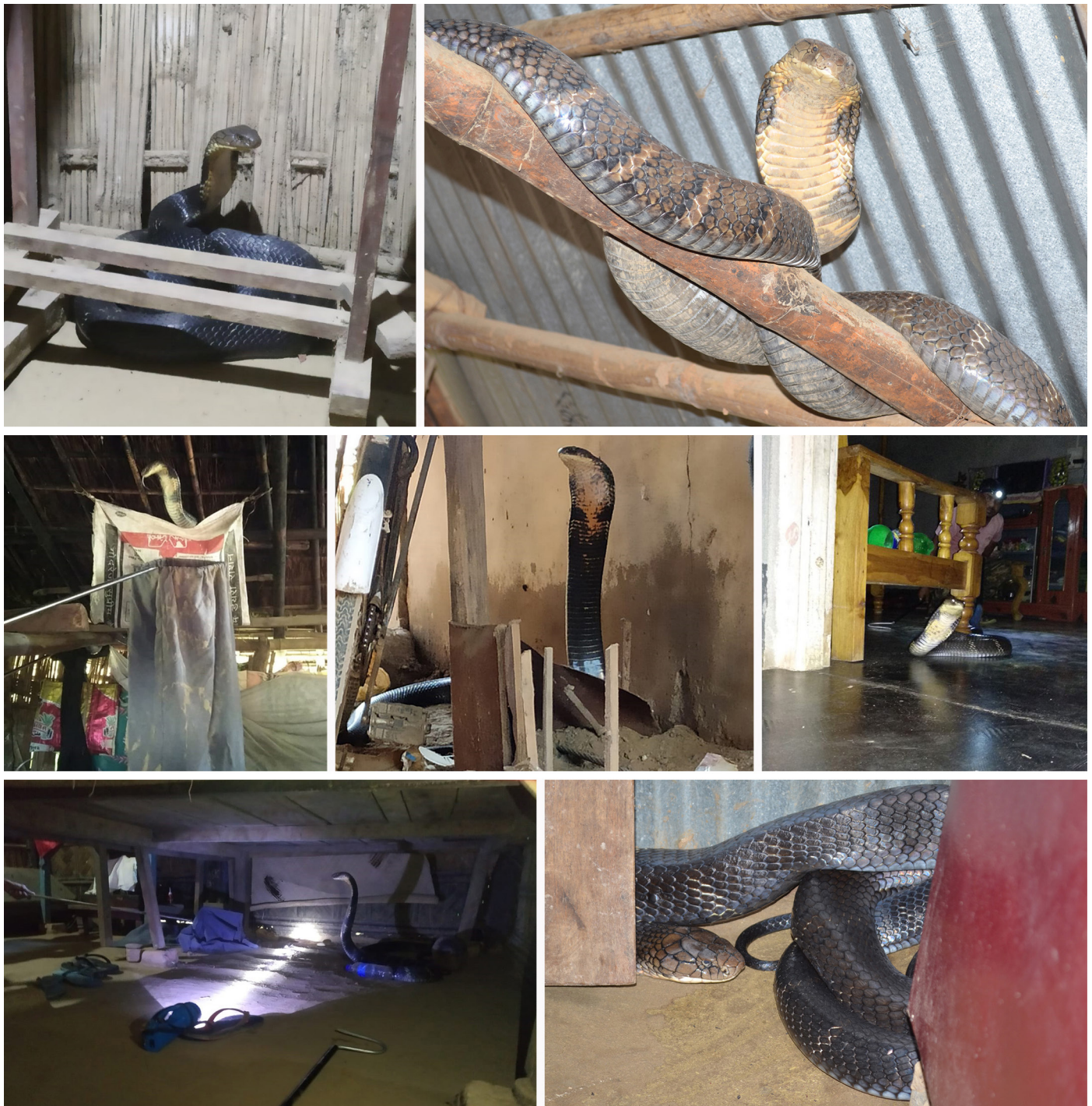


Fig. 2. King Cobras (*Ophiophagus hannah*) rescued in Lumding, Assam, India. Photographs by Bappi Majumder.

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Table 1. Rescue data of King Cobras (*Ophiophagus hannah*) from Lumding, Assam, India. Dashes indicate missing data.

Date	Time	Location	Rescue Site	GPS	Size (m)	Sex
01 Nov 2017	2345	Ganga path, Ward no. 3	Boundary wall	25°45'28.7"N 93°10'22.3"E	3	Female
18 Jun 2018	1030	Lamdning Road, near ASEB	Balcony	—	2.74	Female
11 Apr 2019	0830	Murabasti	Cow shed	25°45'31.7"N 93°11'42.8"E	—	Female
13 Jun 2019	1102	Saukar Polly	Store room	25°46'06.9"N 93°10'01.8"E	2.44	Female
20 Sep 2019	1730	Petrol pump Road	Kitchen	25°45'54.7"N 93°11'21.8"E	3.35	Female
12 Nov 2019	1457	Hornlengphar samajbans	Compartment	25°46'01.6"N 93°10'08.9"E	3.35	Female
13 Nov 2019	1525	Hatikhuli	Boundary wall	25°46'16.0"N 93°10'35.5"E	4.42	Female
09 Dec 2019	1748	Choto Basti	—	25°44'30.9"N 93°08'53.8"E	3.36	Female
02 Apr 2020	1640	Hatikhali, Ward no. 3	Bedroom	25°43'59.4"N 93°08'59.4"E	—	Female
10 Apr 2020	1730	Hatikhuli, Ward no. 3	Store room	25°46'38.2"N 93°08'30.1"E	3.35	Female
11 Apr 2020	1629	Meltatikhulli	Bedroom	25°44'43.6"N 93°11'29.2"E	—	Male
20 Oct 2020	1130	Officers Colony, Durga Mandir	Room	25°46'31.3"N 93°08'24.1"E	3.96	Female
22 Oct 2020	1200	Durga Colony	Garden	25°45'23.9"N 93°08'27.0"E	3.96	Female
16 Nov 2020	1400	Bangla Baazar	Compartment	25°46'21.9"N 93°08'26.5"E	3	Female
22 Nov 2020	1645	Hatikhuli, Ward no. 4	Bedroom	25°44'44.3"N 93°10'58.2"E	—	Male
31 Mar 2021	1535	Terelanchul, Ward no. 9	Store room	25°44'33.5"N 93°10'13.7"E	2.44	Female
02 Apr 2021	1445	—	Kitchen	—	3.96	Female
05 Apr 2021	1815	Santi para	Kitchen	25°46'24.1"N 93°08'41.0"E	—	Female
05 Apr 2021	1700	Hatikhali police outpost	Temple	—	2.44	Female
14 Apr 2021	1435	Mura Basti, WO, No-6	Tata Sumo Car	—	2.74	Female
16 May 2021	2050	Sastri gaon	Bathroom	—	3.35	Male
06 Nov 2021	1327	Hatikhali Ward no. 3	Garden	25°46'36.5"N 93°08'32.9"E	3	Female
13 Nov 2021	1819	Jarang Sisa, near PVN School	—	25°46'02.6"N 93°09'55.3"E	—	Male
26 Nov 2021	1422	—	Kitchen	—	2.74	Female
27 Nov 2021	1625	Jaraungdisa, Ward no. 10	Bedroom	25°44'50.5"N 93°08'43.2"E	3	Male
01 Dec 2021	1530	Hatikhali, near Itabhata	—	25°45'53.2"N 93°09'13.9"E	2.44	Male
15 Dec 2021	1550	Khangar basti	Shop	25°43'39.0"N 93°11'05.5"E	2.74	Male

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