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STUDIES ON DIVERSITY OF SNAKES IN AKOLA DISTRICT OF MAHARASHTRA, INDIA

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Abstract:- The present paper provides the information about the diversity of snakes from Akola District (M.S.) India. The study conducted during February 2013 to January 2015. For survey, the effective protocol was adopted. Study reveals the presence of twenty five species of snakes belonging to six families. In these, the maximum species were non venomous representing the Colubridae family. In the observations, characters were found almost same as per existing records.

Keywords: Diversity, Snake, Akola,

INTRODUCTION

Snakes are the most fascinating animal of the world. The variety of size, shape and colour is due to the different mode of life. Snakes occupy a wide range of habitats, including: fields, forests, wetlands, ponds, lakes, streams, rocky hillsides, farmland, vacant plots and residential areas (Harney 2011). The different anthropogenic activities and modifying environment are the biggest threats to the fauna and our current knowledge about behaviour, natural history and status of Snake species is far from complete (Joshi et al., 2014). So, one of the prime objectives of study was to build a reliable data-base about the diversity these fascinating snakes from Akola District (M.S.) India.

Akola is a district of Indian state Maharashtra. It is a central part of Amravati division. It comprises of 7 tahsil covers total area is of 5431 sq.km and locating in between 20.700 N and 77.010 E with tropical climate. It is bounded on the north by Amravati district to the east by Washim district and west by Buldhana district. The climate of this district is characterized by a hot summer, well-distributed rainfall during the south-west monsoon season and generally dry weather during the rest of the year. The cold season is from December to February (Akola Gazetteer, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

The study conducted during February 2013 to January 2015 aims to diversity of snake from Akola district, (M.S.) India. After detection, specimen was photographed and identified with the help of visible structural features. For identification and comparative studies of observed specimens, keys and methods suggested by Daniel (2002) Whitaker and Captain (2008), and Khaire (2010) were adopted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Akola district of Maharashtra (India) has healthy environment and climatic condition, with classical demography setup as mountainous terrain, rugged configuration and sudden fall in elevation is phenomenal. The twenty five varieties of snakes belonging to six families have been identified within two years of search in the Akola district (Table 1). In these, the maximum species were non venomous representing the Colubridae family. Such community composition was also observed by Nande and Deshmukh (2007) in Amaravati and Melghat while Joshi (2011) in Buldhana District (M.S.) India. In the observations, characters were found almost same as per existing records (Whitaker and Captain 2008, Khaire 2010).

Table 1: Representing status of ophidian species in Buldhana district (M.S.) India					
Sr.	**Scientific Name***	**Common Name***	**Type #**	**Length (inch)**	**Occurrence Status**
Family: Typhlopidae					
1.	*Grypotyphlops acutus*	Beaked worm snake	NV	015	Frequent
2.	*Ramphotyphlops braminus*	Common worm snake	NV	007	Common
Family: Pythonidae					
3.	*Python molurus molurus*	Indian rock python	NV	120	Occasional
Family: Boidae					
4.	*Gongylophis conicus*	Common sand boa	NV	039	Frequent
5.	*Eryx johnii*	Red sand boa	NV	037	Rare
Family: Colubridae					
6.	*Amphiesma stolatum*	Striped keelback	NV	019	Frequent
7.	*Argyrogena fasciolata*	Banded racer	NV	041	Abundant
8.	*Coelognathus h. helena*	Common trinket snake	NV	049	Abundant
9.	*Coelognathus h. monticollaris*	Montane trinket snake	NV	031	Occasional
10.	*Dendrelaphis tristis*	Bronzback tree snake	NV	047	Frequent
11.	*Lycodon aulicus*	Common wolf snake	NV	019	Abundant
12.	*Macropisthodon plumbicolour*	Green keelback	NV	025	Common
13.	*Oligodon arnesis*	Common kukri snake	NV	019	Abundant
14.	*Ptyas mucosa*	Indian rat snake	NV	092	Abundant
15.	*Sibynophis subpunctatus*	Black headed snake	NV	020	Occasional
16.	*Xenochrophis piscator*	Checkered keelback	NV	047	Abundant
17.	*Ahaetulla nasuta*	Common vine snake	SV	035	Occasional
18.	*Boiga forsteni*	Forsten's cat snake	SV	029	Occasional
19.	*Boiga trigonata*	Indian cat snake	SV	031	Abundant
20.	*Psammophis condanarus*	Common sand snake	SV	043	Frequent
Family: Elapidae					
21.	*Bungarus caeruleus*	Common krait	V	062	Common
22.	*Calliophis melanurus*	Slender coral snake	V	017	Rare
23.	*Naja naja*	India spectacled cobra	V	072	Abundant
Family: Viperidae					
24.	*Daboia russelii*	Russell's viper	V	047	Abundant
25.	*Echis carinatus*	Saw-scaled viper	V	025	Frequent

***** According to Whitaker and Captain (2008)
 # Type: NV- Non-Venomous; SV- Semi- venomous; V- Venomous

CONCLUSION

From the study, it is clears that the Akola district (M.S.) India, has healthy environmental and demographic setup which accommodates rich snake diversity. The twenty five varieties of snakes belonging to six families have been identified within two years of search in the Akola district. In the observations, characters were found almost same as per existing records.

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