

Reptilian Fauna of Khandala Tahsil, Maharashtra

V Y Deshpande*, Sidharth Kulkarni, Mahamuni K D and Mahamuni H R

Yashwantrao Chavan Institute of Science, Satara

ABSTRACT

A survey of the Khandala tahsil was carried out for a period of three years beginning from June 2007, for collection and identification of reptiles in the region. It was observed that the area shows 2 species of turtle, 5 species of Geckos, 2 species of lizards, 1 species of chameleon, 2 species of skinks, 1 species of lacertid, 1 species of varanus and 19 species of snakes. Key words: - Reptiles, Khandala tahsil, diversity.

INTRODUCTION

Of the total of 3000 species of reptiles present in the world, India has about 300 known species. The reptiles show adaptations for different habitats. They form a major link in the food chains. They are responsible for keeping the population of many pests like rats under control. The insects are predated by lizards and their number kept in check.

The present study was carried out in the Khandala tahsil of Satara district, during the period June 2007 to October 2010. The study area is located in Nira Valley of Bhima basin. River Nira develops western boundary of about 52 kilometers of the tahsil. Khandala the South boundary is governed by Shambhu Mahadev hill ranges. The North South extension is 14 kms and East West extension is 37 kilometers. The River Nira flows with lower gradient. The reservoir Veer is constructed within the Khandala tahsil limits.

Perusal of literature shows that the Herpatofauna of different areas has been studied (Deoras,P.J, 1970R.vittekar,1977; Sharma,.S.k1999; Shivankar.et.al 2006,Nixon and Bhupaty 2007) by many workers. The present study was undertaken as no survey had been carried out to study the reptilian fauna of the region.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Total area of about 523 Sq.Km , comprising the area was covered using different means of travel. The students have started collecting snakes that have accidentally entered the houses and farm houses in the area. The collected specimens were immediately released in suitable habitat in the area. The snakes were collected by bagging method with no risk being taken. They were not handled, nor kept in the house or laboratory and released immediately. To collect geckos, skinks and other small specimen small sized nets were used. The entire specimen collected were observed, photographed, identified and released immediately.

Observations:-

The reptiles collected and identified in the present study are listed below.

No	Common name	Scientific name	Abundance
1	Indian flap shell Turtle	<i>Lissemys punctata</i>	C
2	Chitra Turtle	<i>Chitra indica</i>	C
3	Rock gecko	<i>Hemidactylus maculatus</i>	O
4	Brook's house gecko	<i>Hemidactylus brookii</i>	A
5	Northern house gecko	<i>Hemidactylus flaviviridis</i>	A
6	Termite hill gecko	<i>Hemidactylus triedrus</i>	R
7	Ground Gecko	<i>Geckoella dekkansensis</i>	R
8	Indian garden lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>	A
9	Fan-throated lizard	<i>Sitana ponticeriana</i>	C
10	Chamaeleon	<i>Chamaeleon zeylanicus</i>	R
11	Common skink	<i>Mabuya carinata</i>	C
12	Snake skink	<i>Lygosoma punctatus</i>	R
13	Snake eyed lacerta	<i>Ophisops jerdoni</i>	O
14	Common Indian monitor lizard	<i>Varanus benghalensis</i>	R
15	Common worm snake	<i>Ramphotyphlops braminus</i>	O
16	Beaked worm snake	<i>Rhinotyphlops acutus</i>	O
17	John's Earth boa	<i>Eryx johnii</i>	A
18	Banded racer	<i>Argyrogena fasciolatus</i>	O
19	Common Indian cat snake	<i>Boiga trigonatus</i>	O
20	Gunthur racer	<i>Arogyogen a fasciolatus</i>	R
21	Common Indian trinket snake	<i>Elaphe helena helena</i>	O
22	Common wolf snake	<i>Lycodon aulicus</i>	C
23	Barred wolf snake	<i>Lycodon striatus</i>	R
24	Green keelback	<i>Macropisthodon plumbicolor</i>	C
25	Banded kukri snake	<i>Oligodon amensis</i>	O
26	Variegated Kukri snake	<i>Oligodon taeniolata</i>	O
27	Indian rat snake	<i>Ptyas mucosus</i>	C
28	Checkered keelback water snake	<i>Xenochrophis piscator</i>	C
29	Slender coral snake	<i>Calliophis melanurus</i>	R
30	Common Indian krait	<i>Bungarus caeruleus</i>	O
31	Spectacled cobra	<i>Naja naja</i>	C
32	Russell's viper	<i>Daboia russelii</i>	R
33	Saw scaled viper	<i>Echis carinatus</i>	C

A-Abundant, O-occasional, C-common, R-rare.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The area in the present study is having low rainfall and is arid region of Satara district. The turtle species are common and are known to breed in the area as young ones are collected in large numbers during rainy season. The present study shows poisonous snakes out of which Cobra dominates the other poisonous varieties. Saw scaled vipers are common too as the area is covered by small rocks and thorny bushes

Out of the non-poisonous snakes collected observations indicate John's Earth boa to be fairly common. The snake is highly priced due to superstitions surrounding it. Many poachers and traders have been booked for selling the snake in the area.

Varanus is present in large numbers and is observed to be fairly common. The oil of the species was once sold in the local market. The authors have brought the fact to the notice of local forest officials and the trade is now under control and totally stopped.

Gunthur racer is rare in the district but was found in the area. *Sitana ponticerana* found in the region is morphologically different from those found in the neighboring areas. The lizards seem to be somewhat smaller in size and without colour on the fans. The same species found in neighboring satara district shows combination of five colours on the fan. Further studies need to be carried out as the difference may be due to environmental conditions as the colored specimen is found at higher altitudes.

REFERENCES

[1] Daniel, J.C (2002): the book of Indian Reptiles and Amphibians, Bombay Natural History Society and Oxford University Press. Mumbai .

- [2] Deoras,P.J (1970): Snakes of India,National Book Trust, New Delhi.
- [3] Romulus vittekar (1977): Common Indian snakes: a field guide. National book trust.
- [4] Nixon.A.M.A and S.Bhupathy (2007): *J.BNHS*, 104(1) 104-105.
- [5] Shivankar.S.V, ThombareR.D, Sakale J.J, Vaidya D.P and Shedge.S.R.(2006):. *J.Aqua Biol.*Vol 21(1); 93-95.
- [6] Sharma,S.K.(1999) Reptilian and amphibian fauna of Sajjangarh wildlife sanctuary, Udaypur,Rajasthan.*Cobra* 38:14-17.