

## Record of Bombay shield snake *Uropeltis macrolepis macrolepis* (Peters, 1862) in Amba Ghats, Western Maharashtra, Southern India

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### ABSTRACT

Four specimens of Bombay shield snake *Uropeltis macrolepis macrolepis* were observed in the Amba Ghats (17.32° N, 74.30° E), District: Kolhapur, Maharashtra, India. Head is small; tail appears to be cut at a slant. Bluish-black body has yellow spots and a short yellow stripe on each side of the tail. Out of four specimens two were observed in the forest leaf litters along temporary walking track made by tourist people or may be wild and domestic animals and another two specimens were spotted on the bank of small water stream. As per the IUCN Red list of Threatened species *U. macrolepis* listed as least concern. Generally most of the herpetofauna were under threats in nature specifically *U. macrolepis* is also under sever threats like, anthropogenic activities, tourism, construction of new roads in Ghats, vehicular traffic, and mining activities. There is urgent need to determine the impact of these threats on the existing population in the study area.

**Key Words:** Bombay shield snake, Amba, ecology, threats, conservation.

### INTRODUCTION

*Uropeltis macrolepis macrolepis* is commonly known as Bombay shield snake. Uropeltidae (Muller 1832) is a family of characteristic burrowing alethinophidian snakes endemic to peninsular India and Srilanka (Gans 1973, 1976, 1979; Cadle et al. 1990; Bossuyt et al. 2004). *U. macrolepis* is recorded in evergreen, semi evergreen and moist deciduous forests of Indian continent. This species occurs at elevations between 10 and 1,350 m ASL. It is a burrowing snake that feeds on earthworms. At the time of field surveys we have observed four specimens of Bombay shield snake, *U. macrolepis macrolepis* in the Amba Ghats (17.32° N, 74.30° E), District: Kolhapur, Maharashtra, India on Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2014, at 7:45:30 AM within a kilometer distance (Fig. 1A). It has cylindrical body with smooth and shiny scales. Head is small (Fig. 1B); tail appears to be cut at a slant (Fig. 1C). Bluish-black body has yellow spots and a short yellow stripe on each side of the tail (Figs. 1A-C). Out of four specimens two were observed in the forest leaf litters along the walking track made by tourists or may be wild and domestic

animals and another two specimens were spotted on the bank of small water streams. At the time of observation it was just beginning of sunrise; rays are falling on land and slowly warming up the land because previous day evening there was heavy raining.

All four specimens were collected, observed and photographed with the help of digital camera (Cannon DM 1100) and released at collection sites. They were identified based on descriptions available in the literature (Smith 1943; Schulz 1996; Daniel 2002; Sharma 2003; Khaire 2006; Whitaker & Captain 2004; Khaire 2006). Previously this species is known from many sites including Saputara Wildlife Sanctuary (Gujarat), Sanjay Gandhi National Park (Maharashtra),

Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary (Maharashtra), Sahyadri Tiger Reserve (Maharashtra), Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary (Maharashtra), Mollem National Park (Goa), Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary (Goa), and Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary (Goa) as well as the Reserve Forests. However, this is the first report on record of *U. macrolepis macrolepis* from the Amba Ghats, Western Maharashtra. There are no any reports on diversity, density and demographic status of this species, except scattered reports on their distribution in literature.

Amba Ghats is situated on the Kolhapur and Ratnagiri National Highway - 204 at the height of 2000 feet ASL. Amba Ghats has covered with evergreen tropical forest with profusion of thick foliage and sprawling trees.



**Figure 1A-C:** Bombay Shield Snake (A), head region (B) tail region (C) of adult Bombay Shield Snake (*Uropeltis macrolepis macrolepis*) recorded in Amba Ghats, Western Maharashtra, Southern India.

Annual rainfall of Amba Ghats is more than 5080 mm during monsoon season (from June to September). The heavy rainfall, high humidity and thick forest coverage provide very good habitat for herpetofauna. A decade ago this region was lesser anthropogenic pressure and pollution free. Recently there are high anthropogenic activities like, construction of new roads, vehicular traffic, tourist resorts, and increased agricultural and mining activities. In future these activities might be the main threats to this species. There is an urgent need to assess the effect of anthropogenic threats on this population and needs conservation strategies.

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