

# KING COBRA

## Occurrence of *Ophiophagus hannah* in Papikonda National Park, Eastern Ghats, Andhra Pradesh



King Cobra *Ophiophagus hannah* killed by Kothuru and Konthangi villagers of East Godavari, Andhra Pradesh, India on 22 August 2014

IUCN Red List:  
Vulnerable (Stuart  
et al. 2016)

**Reptilia**  
[Class of Reptiles]

**Squamata**  
[Order of Scaled reptiles]

**Elapidae**  
[Family of Venomous  
snake]

***Ophiophagus hannah***  
[King Cobra]

Species described by  
Cantor in 1864

King Cobra *Ophiophagus hannah*, one of the world's largest venomous snake widely distributed in South and Southeast Asia, from Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar (David & Vogel 1996; Selich & Kestle 2002; Stuart et al. 2016).

The King Cobra is listed under Schedule II of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; Appendix II of CITES; and placed in the category Vulnerable by IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Stuart et al. 2016).

The King Cobra distribution in India was reported from Western Ghats, Shiwalik and terai regions of Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, north-eastern India and the Andaman Islands (Das 2002; Whittaker & Captain 2004; Ahmed et al. 2009). In the Western Ghats it is known to occur

in the states covering Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Goa (Smith, 1943; Whitaker

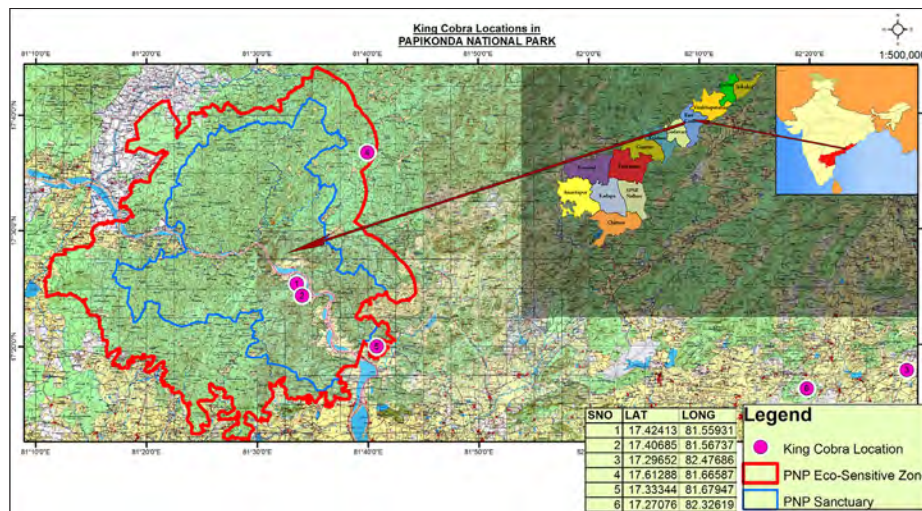
& Captain 2008;

Bashir et al., 2010; Bhisare et al., 2010; Sangha et al., 2011).

In Andhra Pradesh, King Cobra was reported from northern coastal areas, in the districts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and

Visakhapatnam (Murthy & Murthy 2012). This species has been

reported to occur in



**Demarcation of Kind Cobra locations in and around Papikonda National Park**

humid jungles with thick undergrowth, cool swamps and bamboo clusters (David & Vogel 1996; Selich & Kestle 2002; Leviton et al. 2003; Anon 2005; Das et al. 2008).

Faunal survey was conducted in the Papikonda National Park and its adjacent reserve forest. Sign surveys and Camera trapping was followed to know the presence of wildlife.

In this study species identification was done based on photographs in camera traps, specimens and skin moult.

During the survey, at one occasion King Cobra was recorded through camera trapping (Cuddeback attack model infra-red camera traps) on 17 February 2016, the

**Global Distribution:**

South and Southeast Asia from Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar (David & Vogel 1996; Selich & Kestle 2002; Stuart et al. 2016)



**Camera trap picture of King Cobra *Ophophagus hannah* inside the Papikonda National Park, East Godavari, Andhra Pradesh, India on 17 February 2016**



**Table: Current records of King Cobra *Ophiophagus hannah* in Papikonda National Park and adjacent reserve forest, Eastern Ghats, Andhra Pradesh, India**

	Date	Locality (Area Name)	Coordinates	Time	Record	Alt. (m)	Forest type
1.	17.2.2016	Inside Park boundary	17.42413°N & 81.55931°E	04.11PM	Camera trapped	520m	Moist Deciduous Forest
2.	22.7.2016	Inside Park boundary	17.40685°N & 81.56737°E	-	Moult	520m	Moist Deciduous Forest
3.	14.3.2017	Outside the Protected area	17.29652°N & 82.47686°E	-	Killed by the villagers	238m	Moist Deciduous Forest
4.	13.8. 2016	Inside the Ecosensitive Zone (Satlavada Reserve Forest)	17.61288°N & 81.66587°E	02.05PM	Direct Sighting	532m	Moist Deciduous
5.	18.2.2016	Inside the Ecosensitive Zone (Satlavada Reserve Forest)	17.33344°N & 81.67947°E	-	Moult	260m	Moist Deciduous Forest
6.	06.9.2016	Outside the Protected area	17.27076°N & 82.32619°E	-	Killed by the villagers	154m	Moist Deciduous

location and altitudes were recorded using a Garmin etrex 10 GPS receiver (Table). Two King Cobras 13.5 ft female 13.8ft male were killed by the Kothuru and Konthangi villages of East Godavari district which is about 86 and 70 kms. respectively from the park boundary and these two specimens were preserved in the Biodiversity Laboratory maintained by Andhra Pradesh forest department stationed at Rajamahendravaram. Two moults at different locations were also observed during the study period. The area where the camera trapped and sightings were moderately dense forest which included the bamboo patches and also a stream flows seasonally nearby. The altitude was recorded to be 532m. There were some unconfirmed reports from western region of the Papikonda National Park which needs detailed study.

The forest types of the Papikonda National Park and Satlavada Reserve Forest come under the southern dry mixed deciduous forests (5A/C3) and the southern moist mixed deciduous forests (3B/C2) (Champion & Seth 1968).

Since there were no records from this region, these are the first evidences reported on extension of King Cobra distributional range in Papikonda National Park and its adjacent reserve forests in Eastern Ghats, Andhra Pradesh. As the present record confirms the presence of isolated populations of King Cobra and also the records of human animal conflict, there is a need to carry out awareness programmes in the adjacent villages and also to conduct baseline study by the park managers and researchers on the conservation status in this region.



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