

# BURMESE PYTHON

## New sighting record of *Python bivittatus* in Sumera Block, Jawan, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India



IUCN Red List:  
Vulnerable  
(Stuart et al.  
2012)

Burmese Python resting on ground under the shade of Bistendu

**Reptilia**  
[Class of Reptiles]

**Squamata**  
[Order of scaled reptiles]

**Pythonidae**  
[Family of Python]

***Python bivittatus***  
[Burmese Python]

Species described by  
Kuhl in 1820

Pythons include some of the world's largest and spectacular snakes that comprise of an enormous diversity of morphology, behaviour and ecology (Reynolds et. al. 2014). The Indian subcontinent is a home to three species of pythons which are the Indian Rock Python (*Python molurus*, Linnaeus, 1758) the Burmese Python (*Python bivittatus*, Kuhl, 1820) and the Reticulated Python (*Python reticulatus*, Schneider, 1801). The Burmese Python and Indian Rock Python are two distinct species (Jacobs et. al. 2009; Reynolds et. al. 2014; Barker et. al. 2015).

A prominent difference is the presence or absence of a sub ocular scale (Joshi R. and Singh A. (2015)). Indian Rock Python is distinguished with sixth/seventh labium touching the eye, having unclear lance-shaped mark on the top of the head and pink tongue in adults. While in Burmese Python, the labia are separated from the eye by sub-oculars (O'Shea 1998; Smith 1943;



Daniel 2002; Whitaker & Captain 2004).

Burmese Python is a nocturnal species, but sometimes can be seen during daytime while basking, resting or foraging on preys. Its activity is usually terrestrial and semi-aquatic in nature, carried out with slow locomotion. Burmese Pythons grow up to 3.7 metres on average, rarely grow up to 4 metres. It is usually non-offensive in behaviour and the species tends to escape in natural surroundings to avoid conflict with humans and other large predators. It feeds on a wide range of animals including rodents, bats, mammals, reptiles and birds.

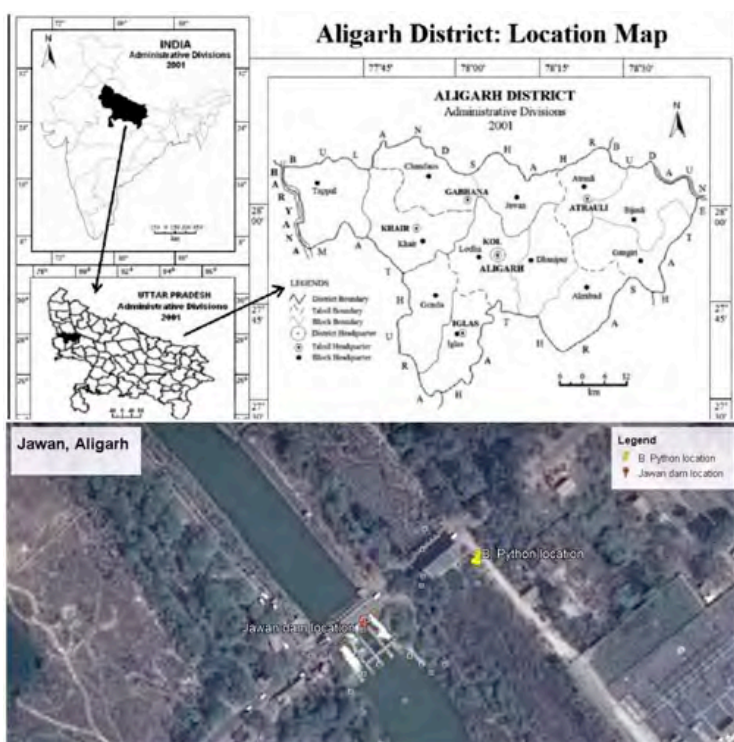
Burmese pythons are found throughout the Southeast Asia, including eastern India, Nepal, parts of

**Global Distribution:**

Throughout the Southeast Asia including eastern India, Nepal, parts of Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, northern Malaysia and Southern China (Barker & Barker 2008, 2010)

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On 18 May, 2017, while collecting the data for my M.Sc. Dissertation on Rhesus macaques (*Macaca mulatta*) at 10.15hrs, I observed some of the Rhesus macaques become highly disturbed and they were yowling in an unusual manner. I tried to figure out the reason for their panic and observed their awareness about some possible danger lurking inside the bushes of Bistendu (*Diospyros montana*) and Babool (*Acacia nilotica*) along the



Map of Jawan, where Burmese Python was sighted; Source: Google earth and [www.researchgate.net/profile/Shamshad2](http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Shamshad2)

marshy land of Canna grass (*Saccharum benghalense*). The area is dominated by Canna grass and stagnant water and is situated in the rear vicinity of Bijaligarh (28°02'26.4"N & 78°06'51.9"E), Sumera Block, Jawan, Aligarh.

I presumed the cause to be a snake and decided to find it out. My deduction proved to be right when, upon approaching the bushes, I noticed a huge Python resting on the ground under the shades of Bistendu (*Diospyros montana*) and other plants in the surrounding. When the Python sensed my presence, it moved downwards into a grassy area through the bushes. After sometime of trivial inactivity, it moved back to its original location where it was found resting. I captured some spectacular images of the





**Table: Recent Sightings of Burmese Python**

	Place	Co-ordinates	Date of Sighting
1.	Rajaji National Park	29°53'50.5"N & 78°16'47.8"E	Mar 31, 2007
2.	Hastinapur Range	29°04'51.40"N & 78°03'46.10"E	Nov 14, 2009
3.	Forest Rest House, Hastinapur Range	29°09'16.73"N & 77°59'58.44"E	Dec 28, 2009
4.	Rispna River, Jakhan	30°21'57.7"N & 78°04'38.7"E	Sep 15, 2010
5.	Timli Forest Range, Kalsa Forest Division	30°20'N; 77°40' E & 30°25'N	Oct 14, 2011
6.	Lacchiwala Forest Range	30°15'19.1"N & 78°01'55.8"E	Nov 08, 2011

Python with my android device. The estimated length of the python was approximately 3m. Age-sex could not be identified as it escaped from the sighting before close physical examination. From my initial observations and descriptions, I concluded it to be a Burmese Python. My further attempts to examine it were met with failure as it got disturbed and started moving under the bushes into the inaccessible Canna grass again. I tried to grab its tail and pull back to an open space to study some more data about its physical aspects but it was too heavy for me.



**Burmese Python**

This area is located in the vicinity of the Ganges where 'Jawan dam' is situated in Sikandarpur, Aligarh.

The next day, I attempted to relocate the Python in the morning but could not locate it even after several hours of extensive search. In the adjoining area, there is a Sumera Block Electricity staff office, where some of the workers informed me about the appearance of the python. Although the python is living in this area for quite some time as reported by the locals, it might be a natural distribution or an escapee from the snake charmers. Even the possibilities are that it might have floated down from Rajaji National Park or from Hastinapur area along the Upper Ganga Canal which originates from Haridwar (Uttarakhand), and passes nearby area where I initially sighted the python.

Most of the sightings of the Burmese Python occurred during the Summer-Monsoon Season near natural water sources, in grasslands and in the riparian corridors of the Ganges (Joshi & Singh 2015). Recent studies have



also revealed that the Upper-Gangetic plains provide a suitable habitat for pythons in the tropical moist deciduous forest of north-western India along with Ganges. The networks of seasonal rivers of Ganges also contribute to the survival and dispersal of the python species (Joshi and Singh, 2015); which confirms that the range and distribution of Burmese Python is changing as new sightings were recorded from different areas.

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