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Second sighting record of King Cobra in Kolhapur Western Ghats, India



The second sighting record of King Cobra in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, Western Ghats, India.

King Cobra *Ophiophagus hannah* is the longest venomous snake that measures up to 5.5 m (18 ft) in length (Wallach et al. 2014). This rare species belongs to the 'Vulnerable' category of the IUCN (Stuart et al. 2012). It is widely distributed in southern and southeastern Asia up to 2,000 m (Stuart et al. 2012). King Cobra inhabits a variety of habitats from degraded forests, mangrove swamps, agricultural fields, plantations, grasslands, wetlands, dense forests, primary

forests, and secondary forests nearby human habitats and streams (Daniel 2002; Stuart et al. 2012; Whitaker & Captain 2015). In the Indian subcontinent it occurs in dense forest and hilly areas of tea/coffee estates in the Western Ghats of southern India, the Himalayan slopes, parts of central and northeastern India, and the Andaman Islands (Sangha et al. 2011; Murthy & Murthy 2012; Chandra et al. 2014).



In the Western Ghats, King Cobra is reported up to Goa from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka (Whitaker & Captain 2015). Off late, many studies have been done on King Cobras in the Western Ghats (Bhaisare et al. 2010; Barve et al. 2013; Gowrishankar et al. 2013; Rao et al. 2013); yet, until recently, its presence in Maharashtra state was unknown. Yadav & Yankanchi (2015) reported it from Tillari forest in Kolhapur of southern Maharashtra. In this note, we report another sighting record of King Cobra from a nearby locality in Maharashtra.

We were visiting Kalanadigad (15.856 N 74.252 E; 316 m) in Chandgad taluk of Kolhapur district for bird watching field trip on 01 January 2020. The second author, SMH, sighted a King Cobra (Video 1) around 1520 h in dry grass. The snake was there for about five minutes before it slithered off into the nearby forest. It was a large, adult snake. The snake was confirmed as a King Cobra by referring the descriptions given in books by Daniel (2002) and Whitaker & Captain (2015). The present sighting record of King Cobra in Kalanadigad is located around 15 km east from Tillari Village.

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