

Herpetofauna Sur Sarovar Bird Sanctuary, Keetham, Agra, U. P.

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The Sur Sarovar Bird Sanctuary (SSBS) lies in the Indo-gangetic Plains on the banks of the river Yamuna. Of its total area of 403.09 hectares, 7.2 km² is a wetland. No significant research has previously been conducted on the herpetofauna of this area. In recent times heavy use of agricultural fertilizers has affected amphibian populations along the river; there is permanent anoxia in the Yamuna at Agra.

Survey methods

We carried out study of the herpetofauna of SSBS during the rainy seasons between March 2001 and May 2003. Potentially stressful activities (including measuring, tagging or handling) were avoided. For snakes, certain habitats were searched and screened. Tracks were counted every hour. All water bodies were sampled for aquatic amphibians, and soil was dug to determine the presence of burrowing frogs. Estimates of abundance (>25 = common, 10-25 = uncommon, <10 = rare), main habitat occurrence and miscellaneous observations on the biology of each species were made.

We recorded 37 species (10 amphibians and 27 reptiles) in SBSS, representing 14 families and 28 genera (see table). We found three species of monitor lizard, of which the Bengal monitor was most common: there have been many records of large scale illegal trade in monitor lizards and other reptiles in Central India. The slender coral snake was recorded for the first time in the area. The spectacled cobra, Western rat snake and Indian rock python were the most common terrestrial snakes while the checkered keelback water snake was common in aquatic areas. We estimated that about 20 pythons inhabit SSBS.

An important habitat

The number of reptiles found in SSBS is high considering its size, perhaps due to its strategic placement in the semi-arid habitat of the Gangetic Plains. It has the potential to support a wealth of herpetofauna, and the protection rendered by the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department may also have helped maintain high densities of some species.

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Herpetofauna recorded in Sur Sarovar Bird Sanctuary during 2001-2003		
SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	STATUS
Amphibians		
Family Bufonidae (toads)		
<i>Bufo melanostictus</i>	Common Indian toad	Common
<i>Bufo stomaticus</i>	Marbled toad	Uncommon
Family Microhylidae		
<i>Microhyla ornata</i>	Ornate-narrow mouthed frog	Rare
<i>Uperodon systoma</i>	Marbled balloon frog	Common
Family Ranidae		
<i>Euphlyctis hexadactylus</i>	Indian pond frog	Common
<i>Euphlyctis cyanophlyctis</i>	Skipping frog	Common
<i>Hoplobatrachus tigerinus</i>	Bull frog	Common
<i>Hoplobatrachus crassus</i>	Jerdon's bull frog	Common
<i>Limnonectes limnocharis</i>	Cricketer frog	Common
<i>Tomopterna breviceps</i>	Burrowing frog	Uncommon
Reptiles		
Family Bataguridae		
<i>Kachuga tecta</i>	Indian roofed turtle	Uncommon
<i>Kachuga tentoria</i>	Indian tent turtle	Rare
<i>Kachuga dhongoka</i>	Dhongoka terrapin	Common
Family Trionychidae		
<i>Aspideretes gangeticus</i>	Indian soft-shell turtle	Common
<i>Trionyx gangeticus</i>	Ganges soft-shell turtle	Uncommon
<i>Lissemys punctata</i>	Indian flap-shell turtle	Common
Family Gekkonidae		
<i>Hemidactylus brookii</i>	Brook's house gecko	Uncommon
<i>H. flaviviridis</i>	Yellow-green house gecko	Common
Family Agamidae		
<i>Calotes versicolor</i>	Indian garden lizard	Common
Family Chamaeleontidae		
<i>Chameleon zeylanicus</i>	Indian chameleon	Uncommon
Family Scinidae		
<i>Mabuya dissimilis</i>	Striped grass skink	Common
Family Varanidae		
<i>Varanus bengalensis</i>	Bengal monitor lizard	Common
<i>V. griseus</i>	Desert monitor lizard	Uncommon
<i>V. flavescens</i>	Yellow monitor lizard	Uncommon
Family Boidae		
<i>Eryx johnii</i>	Red sand boa	Common
<i>Eryx conicus</i>	Russell's earth boa	Rare
<i>Python molurus</i>	Indian rock python	Common
Family Colubridae		
<i>Boiga trigonatus</i>	Common Indian cat snake	Uncommon
<i>Lycodon aulicus</i>	Common wolf snake	Uncommon
<i>Oligodon arnensis</i>	Banded kukri snake	Rare
<i>Ptyas mucosus</i>	Western rat snake	Common
<i>Xenochrophis piscator</i>	Checkered keelback water snake	Common
Family Elapidae		
<i>Bungarus caeruleus</i>	Common Indian krait	Rare
<i>Naja naja</i>	Spectacled cobra	Common
<i>Calliophis melanurus</i>	Slender coral snake	Rare
Family Viperidae		
<i>Daboia russelii</i>	Russell's viper	Rare
<i>Echis carinatus</i>	Indian saw-scaled viper	Rare

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