

Note

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New locality records of the Stout Sand Snake *Psammophis longifrons* Boulenger, 1890 (Reptilia: Squamata: Lamprophiidae) in Telangana, India

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The Stout Sand Snake *Psammophis longifrons* Boulenger, 1890 is a rare, endemic Indian snake recorded from Thane, Maharashtra (Dereckman 1892), Thane, Damanganga, Bulsar, Panch Mahals and Nagpur, Maharashtra and Gujarat (Smith 1943), Surat, Gujarat (Vyas 1987), Amravati, Melghat and Buldana, Maharashtra (Nande & Deshmukh 2007; Joshi 2011), Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh (Ingle 2009), Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh (Kumbhar et al. 2012), Navsari and Valsad, Gujarat (Vyas & Patel 2013), Mokhada, Maharashtra (Bansode et al. 2016), Shimoga, Karnataka (Premkumar & Sharma 2017) (Image 1). Here we record the presence of *P. longifrons* in Telangana.

On 26 November 2015, at 11:00hr, J. Prabhakar, a member of the “Friends of Snakes Society”, rescued a *Psammophis longifrons* (Image 2A) that had entered a suburban residence in Boduppall, Hyderabad (Buddha Nagar, Boduppall 17°24'51.6636”N & 78°35'44.4516”E, elevation 498m). This is the first record from the state of Telangana. Another live specimen (Image 2B) was rescued by Aparna Ravi, another member of the same organization, on 22 January 2016, at 11:44hr, while responding to a distress call from Hayathnagar (G.V.R. Colony, Tattiannaram, Hayathnagar 17.36361111 N & 78.60166667 E, 488m).

The specimens were collected, studied and photographed, before their subsequent relocation, close to their home range. Morphometric measurements and pholidosis were measured using standard methods as defined by Whitaker & Captain (2004).

Specimen 1 (S1): female, measuring 700mm, snout to vent length 510mm, tail length 190mm. Dorsal scales (counted one head-length behind the head, at mid-body and at one head length anterior to the vent) were in rows of 17:17:13; ventrals 154; subcaudals 88 (paired); supralabials 8, with 4th and 5th in contact with the eye; postoculars 2; preocular 1 (grooved); loreal 1 (elongated, horizontally grooved); nasal scales divided into one anterior and two posterior nasals; temporals 2+3; anal scale divided.

Specimen 2 (S2): female, measuring 1031mm, snout to vent length 920mm, tail length 111mm (a portion of the tail was missing). Dorsal scales (counted one head-length behind the head, at mid-body and at one head length anterior to the vent) were in rows of 17:17:13; ventrals 165; subcaudals 20 paired (a portion of the tail was missing); supralabials 8, with 4th and 5th in contact with the eye; postoculars 2; preocular 1 (grooved); loreal 1 (elongated, horizontally grooved); nasal scales divided into one anterior and two posterior nasals; temporals 2+3; anal scale divided.

Scales were smooth and lustrous; dorsum was pale olive and the ventral part was pale yellow. Paraventral scales or the outermost dorsal scale rows were bi-coloured—top half resembled the dorsum colouration, while the bottom half was pale yellow, like the ventral scales. Two longitudinal pale yellow stripes, running parallel, were present on the dorsum, from cervical region to the tail tip. Each dorsal scale, between these two stripes, was enveloped by a black border. Broad black margins

surrounded the vertebral scales, forming a continuous chain along the back. Black symmetrical markings were present on the parietal, frontal and supraocular scales.

While briefly being kept in captivity before its relocation, it was observed that *P. longifrons* was strictly diurnal, feeding on geckoes, *Hemidactylus* sp. (Image 2C). Prey was actively pursued and subdued before being ingested head first. Both specimens were terrestrial; however, they climbed vegetation with ease. Rescue sites of both individuals were surrounded by dry deciduous thorny vegetation.

Current reports from the state of Telangana, India are mere accidental encounters, due to rapid urbanization and habitat fragmentation. There is an urgency to carry out thorough scientific assessments to identify distribution ranges and support concrete efforts to conserve this rare species.

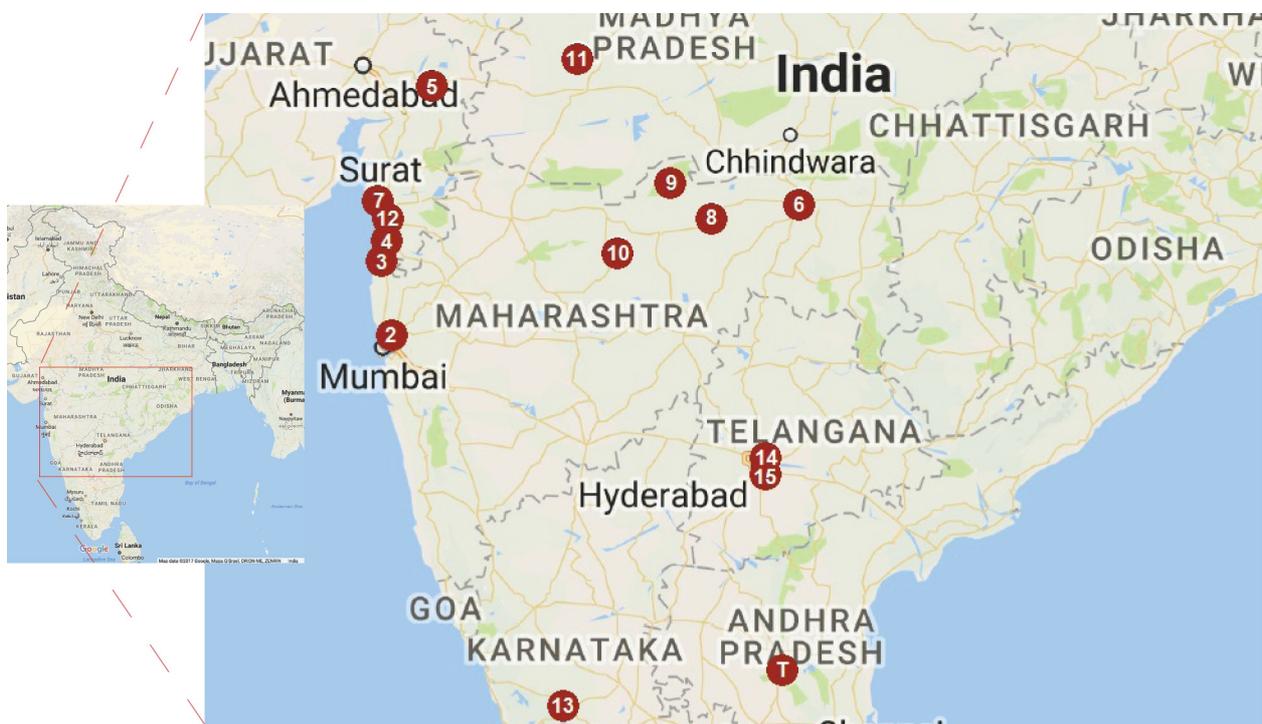


Image 1. Documented distribution records of *P. longifrons* - 1. T. Cuddapah, Andhra Pradesh (Type locality); 2. Thane, Maharashtra (Dreckmann 1892; Smith 1943); 3. Damanganga, Maharashtra (Smith 1943); 4. Valsad, Gujarat (Smith 1943; Vyas & Patel 2013); 5. Panch Mahals, Gujarat (Smith 1943); 6. Nagpur, Maharashtra (Smith 1943); 7. Surat, Gujarat (Vyas 1987); 8. Amravati, Maharashtra (Nande & Deshmukh 2007); 9. Melghat, Maharashtra (Nande & Deshmukh 2007); 10. Buldana, Maharashtra (Joshi 2011); 11. Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh (Ingle 2009); 12. Navsari, Gujarat (Vyas & Patel 2013); 13. Shimoga, Karnataka (Premkumar & Sharma 2017); 14. Boduppal, Telangana (present study); 15. Hayathnagar, Telangana (present study)



Image 2. *Psammophis longifrons*: A - Full body (S1); B - Lateral close-up of the head (S1); C - S2 feeding on *Hemidactylus* sp.

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