

Natural History Notes

CALLIOPHIS BIBRONI (Bibroni Coral Snake): REDISCOVERY IN MUDUMALAI TIGER RESERVE, SOUTH INDIA. Mudumalai Tiger Reserve is a part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR) of the Western Ghats. It lies between 11.032°-11.042°N & 76.020°-76.040°E and is situated at the junction of three Southern States, viz. Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. The Reserve is surrounded by Bandipur Tiger Reserve in the north, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary in the west and Nilgiri North Forest Division in the east and south and it covers an area of 321 km², with an average elevation of 900–1000 m asl. The Mudumalai Tiger Reserve has several roads including an inter-state highway (Tamil Nadu to Karnataka) passing through the reserve. These roads have been identified as the source of wildlife road mortalities including endangered species (Gokula, 1997).

The Bibroni Coral Snake (*Calliophis bibroni*) was first recorded and identified in January, 1858 by Beddome (1867) and referred as an endemic to the Western Ghats, South India. Boulenger (1896) described scale count of four specimens collected by Beddome. Later on Wall (1919) reported on young specimen of this species and mentioned it as a rare species. Smith (1943) described the known distribution range from the Western Ghats as far north as Coorg. Recent new locality records from the Anamalai Hills and Agastiyar Hills have considerably extended the previously known range (Deepak et al., 2010). The distribution has been described as severely fragmented (P. David pers. comm., 2010), but is likely to occur in more than ten locations due to its relatively wide geographical and elevational range. It is terrestrial in habit, inhabiting moist deciduous forests within an altitudinal range between 900–1000 m msl. The IUCN status of this species is Least Concern in view of its wide distribution, presumed large overall population and because it is unlikely to be declining fast enough to qualify for listing in a more threatened category (IUCN, 2013).

This note reports on the discovery of a road-killed *C. bibroni* during field work on 24th August 2013 in Theppakadu at NH 66 in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (N 11.57712°, E 076.57072°) at an elevation of 894 m msl (Fig. 1). The snake was identified using descriptions



Figure 1. Road kill of Bibroni Coral snake. Photograph by A. Samson.

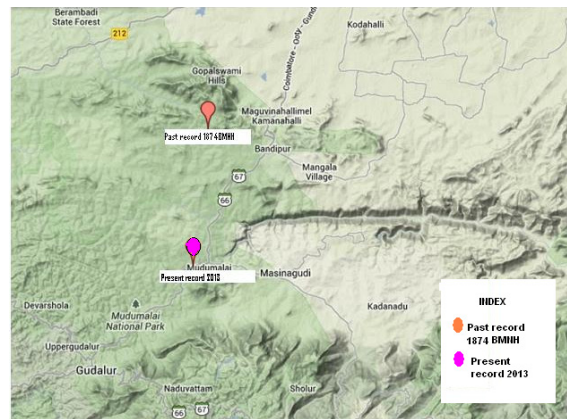


Figure 2. Map showing the past and present records from the Bibroni Coral Snake in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (Map source: Google Earth).

in Smith (1943) and Whitaker & Captain (2004). The previous record of the snake in Mudumalai National Park was in 1874 in the Karnataka region by Bombay Museum Natural History (BMNH) (Fig. 2). This present observation therefore is the first record for 139 years in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve of the Tamil Nadu region (Fig.2). Other previous records of this snake in the Tamil Nadu region were in the Anamalai Tiger Reserve by Deepak et al., (2010) in 2007, 2008 and 2009. The first specimen was found in the Manamboli Range, second and third specimens were cited in the Top slip regions of Anamalai Tiger Reserve. These three specimens were cited, collected and preserved by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI). The present observation is a new locality record for *C. bibroni* in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve of Tamil Nadu region.

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