Occurrence of *Ophiophagus hannah* Cantor, 1836 (Squamata, Elapidae) in Tillari, Maharashtra, India

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The King cobra (*Ophiophagus Hannah* Cantor, 1836) is the longest venomous snake in the world (up to 5.73 meter longs (Mehrtens, 1987)). This species is considered as species complex, due to variation in colouration, scalation and body proportion (Das, 2002). It is distributed across Southeast Asia and southern areas of East Asia (Stuart et al., 2012 IUCN). It is found mostly in and around tropical rainforests, but also occurs in habitats such as mangrove swamps and agricultural fields (Gowri Shankar et al., 2013). In the Western Ghats this species is known from Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu (Black Rock Estate) in the south ranging north as far as North Goa (Bondla wildlife Sanctuary) covering the states Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Goa (Smith, 1943; Whitaker and Captain, 2008; Bashir et al., 2010; Bhaisare et al., 2010; Sangha et al., 2011).

In March 2015, while conducting herpetofaunal surveys near a human settlement in southern Maharashtra state, near Tillari Village (15.80606 N, 74.197942 E, 721 m a.s.l, WGS84) we observed a single *Ophiophagus hannah*. This snake was seen hiding in a mosque; we observed it for few minutes after which it escaped into bushes nearby. It was not captured; however photographs show some key diagnostic characters for this species, a pair of large occipital shields and obviously its large size.

Although not published *O. hannah* is also known from Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary, Goa and Jamboti, Karnataka, both localities little north of the published locality (Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary, Goa) (Giri Varad, Not Published). However this record extends the known distribution range of *O. hannah* by about 42km towards north, and appears to be a first authenticated record from Maharashtra state, hence noteworthy.

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Figure 1. Ophiophagus Hannah in Tillari, Maharashtra, India (Not Collected). Photograph By- Omkar Yadav
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References


Figure 2. Map showing new sites of Ophiophagus Hannah, and previous northernmost record. Red dot- Tillari, Maharashtra; Yellow dot- Bondla WLS, Goa. Blue Dots- Mhadei WLS, Goa and Jamboti, Karnataka (Observations by Varad Giri). Image source- Google Earth.