

## **Altitudinal sighting of King Cobra *Ophiophagus Hannah* in Arunachal Pradesh.**

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The King Cobra *Ophiophagus hannah*, though not a common snake, has a wide distribution in India. It inhabits dense jungle in Peninsular and northern India. Its range extends throughout the Western Ghats within the states of Karnataka, Goa, Kerala and Tamilnadu; throughout the Terai and Bhabar tracts and lower foothills of Uttaranchal, UP, Bihar, West Bengal and Northeast (including Arunachal Pradesh) and Andaman Islands. The species exhibits a preference for dense primary forests and mangrove dominant estuaries of Orissa and West Bengal. Occasionally found in large tracts of grassland surrounded by dense forest (Smith, 1943; Daniel, 2002; Whitaker & Captain, 2004).

Smith (1943) mentions its occurrence at altitudes around 1800m in the Nilgiris and western Himalayas. A nest was recently located in Uttaranchal between Bhowali and Ramgarh at an altitude of approximately 1364 to 1515 m. There have been verbal reports of the species being sighted within the interior of the eastern Kumaun Himalaya in deep river valleys where vegetation is almost tropical (A.J.T. Johnsingh, pers.comm.). In October 2006, while conducting bird surveys throughout western Arunachal, a dead juvenile King Cobra *c.* 21 cm in length was located on the forest track below Chandar towards 7 km settlement in degraded forest at 2005 m. Though the King Cobra's range extends usually at lower altitudes, it appears the species is not adverse to surviving at higher altitudes where prey availability and habitat are suitable.

### **References**

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Smith, M.A. 1943: *Fauna of British India*. Vol. III. Taylor and Francis, London.

Whitaker, R. & Captain, A. 2004: *Snakes of India, The Field Guide*. Draco Books, Chennai.