



Snake Mortality on a Railway Track in the Simdega Forest Division, Jharkhand, India

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The Common Krait, *Bungarus caeruleus* (Schneider 1801), is a venomous snake that occurs throughout southern Asia. It is medicinally significant and considered to be among the four most important venomous snakes of India. The Indian Ratsnake, *Ptyas mucosa* (Linnaeus 1758), is a non-venomous snake found in southern Asia. Snakes are vital components of ecosystems and play important roles by controlling populations of rodents that damage crops. Threats to snakes include habitat loss, overexploitation, and the illegal skin trade (Whitaker and Captain 2004). *Bungarus caeruleus* is protected under Schedule IV and *Ptyas mucosa* under Schedule II of part 2 of the Indian Wild Life Protection Act, 1972.

At 2130 h on 21 October 2019, our team found a Common Krait and an Indian Ratsnake that had been killed less than 100 m apart on a railway track near the Parbatonia Railway Station in Simdega District, Jharkhand, India (22.508093°N, 84.946913°E; elev. 286 m asl). The surrounding vegetation is moist deciduous forest (Champion and Seth 1968) dominated by Sal trees (*Shorea robusta*). The krait was approximately 60 cm in length (the head had been damaged) and only the tail remained of the ratsnake.

Most reports of animals killed on railway tracks in India involved large mammals (e.g., Johnsingh et al. 1999; Sarma et al. 2006), although Vyas and Vasava (2019) and Sivaraj et al. (2018) documented deaths of Mugger Crocodiles (*Crocodylus palustris*) in Gujarat and a King Cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah*) in Tamil Nadu, respectively. This observation is the first report of snake mortality on railroad tracks in Jharkhand.

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Fig. 1. Railway-track mortality of a Common Krait (*Bungarus caeruleus*) (left) and an Indian Ratsnake (*Ptyas mucosa*) (right) near the Parbatonia Railway Station, Simdega District, Jharkhand, India. Photographs by Narain Purty.