



Unique band pattern in Common Krait (*Bungarus caeruleus*) recorded in Ahmedabad, Gujarat

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The Big Four of India include the Common Krait (*Bungarus caeruleus*), belong to family elapidae family. This species is considered among the extremely venomous snakes, and found throughout the Indian subcontinent (Mukherjee, 2021). Despite being nocturnal, one might nevertheless come across this snake during the day. A common krait typically has a body that is blackish-brown with white bands running all over its body surface. Numerous guides and publications on snake identification have documented the common krait's typical morphology. The species belongs to the *Bungarus* genus, is largely native to the Indian subcontinent. Its geographic range includes West Bengal, South India, Sri Lanka, and the Sindh region (Ahsan and Rahman, 2017). Observations have been made that this species can be found up to a height of 1,600 metres (Gopalkrishnakone and Chou, 1990).

The length of common krait varies from 0.9m, or 2.11ft, to 1.75 m, or 5.9 ft, according to specific records (Uetz, and Freed, 2020). Males have proportionately longer tailed than females, as is the case with many other species. The neck section is typically barely noticeable, and the skull structure is typically flat. The body of a common krait is cylindrical and tapered toward the tail, which is short and rounded someplace. It has small, rounded pupils in its eyes. The head shields lack any loreals and are quite plain. On the body, the third and fourth supra-oculars meet the eye, and there are four shields along the lower lip edge.

Vertebral scales that resemble hexagons are a particularly distinctive identifying trait of all Krait species. The presence of unpaired sub-caudal scales with a colour similar to the species' belly is another one of the key characteristics of the genus *Bungarus* that is almost missing in any other Elapid of India. The top lips and belly are white, and there could be a pre-ocular white patch. (Gopalkrishnakone and Chou, 1990). According to Whitaker's (2006) description of the Common krait, the head part has seven scales, and the third and fourth supra-labials come into contact with the eyes. As the preocular meets the posterior nasal portion in this species, the loreal is missing. In addition, the eighth scale, which is larger than its neighbouring dorsal scales and has a hexagonal shape, is located on top of the dorsal body along the vertebra. The vertebral row is especially expanded and has a hexagonal shape, according to (Gopalkrishnakone and Chou, 1990). The scales are also highly polished, with



15–17 rows, and the ventral and caudal are both complete, or intact. Indian krait bite patients also have neuro-paralytic symptoms and also frequently experience abdominal pain and cramps due to internal bleeding. (Mukherjee, 2021).

During the nature trekking in the suburbs of “Bopal” area of Daskroi sub district of Ahmedabad district, we found an unusual snake in the densely populated area, after prolonged observation and identification it was concluded that the observed species is a common Krait with a rare and unusual pattern of bands on its body (Figure 2). As mentioned above, the common appearance of the common krait (Figure 1), the recorded species serves all the perspectives of the common krait except the bands on the surface and hence photographs were taken for further investigation. The species was not harmed and further observation and analysis were done with the help of the pictures. As per the photographic evidence and by cross-referring through many, it was concluded that the species is common krait (*Bungarus caeruleus*) however, the band pattern of the recorded species was quite different than the usual one. The common band pattern is of double white circular bands throughout the body, whereas the recorded species showed a chain structure of white-coloured double bands throughout the body with a tapering tail. Scales and patterns on the surface body of snakes is a vital information for Snakes identification, through common guides and handbook we may know the usual pattern of the common snakes however any abnormality or unusualness in the pattern of the known species shall be recorded for future study purposes, however certain care should be provided so it may not harm the species.



Figure 1: Common appearance of common Krait (*Bungarus caeruleus*)



Figure 2: (Recorded species) Very rare and unusual pattern of bands on Common Krait (*Bungarus caeruleus*)

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