



New records of hump-nosed viper *Hypnale nepa* from the Horton Plains, Sri Lanka

The Sri Lankan Hump-nosed Viper, *Hypnale nepa* (Laurenti, 1768) is an endemic species restricted to montane regions above 900 m in Sri Lanka. The Horton Plains is a national park and a montane forest (alt. 2,100–2,300 m a.s.l.) mostly covered by wet grasslands (IUCN 1990). Faunal surveys carried out in the Horton Plains have so far recorded only three species of snakes: *Aspidura trachyprocta*, *A. copei*, and *Ptyas mucosa* (DWC 2007). Herein, we confirm a fourth snake species, and the first photographic evidence of the occurrence of *H. nepa* from the Horton Plains, based on two observations made during random visits. Snakes were identified as *H. nepa* based on the morphological characters in Maduwage *et al.* (2009).

Observation I. 23 March 2019 at 09:05 h, SSA observed a *Hypnale* sp. (~15 cm in total length; Fig. 1) crossing the trail (alt. 2,140 m a.s.l.; 6°47'35.3"N, 80°48'19.0"E);

Observation II. 29 January 2022 at 11:14 h, BPA observed a deceased specimen of *Hypnale* sp. on the trail (alt. 2,080 m a.s.l.; 6°47'5.94"N, 80°47'59.20"E).



Figure 1. The first observation of *H. nepa* (in life) from the Horton Plains, Sri Lanka in 2019

Hypnale nepa is confined to higher elevations in the central mountains, particularly to the Peak Wilderness Sanctuary and the Knuckles Mountain Range (Maduwage *et al.* 2009). Janzen (2021) reported this species from Rakwana massif, confirming its occurrence on all three major mountains in the island. The observations of this study also represent the highest elevation record for *H. nepa*.

Literature cited

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