

Xenochrophis cerasogaster (Cantor, 1839) (Serpentes: Colubridae): Distribution extension in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT: We report the first locality record of *Xenochrophis cerasogaster* from Bangladesh, at the Patuakhali District in Barisal Division.

Bangladesh, situated in subtropical Asia, is rich in biodiversity. Nonetheless, its herpetofauna remains poorly explored. Survey efforts of the herpetofauna of Bangladesh are limited and many published works are deficient in data specificity (Mahony and Reza 2008). Although *Xenochrophis cerasogaster* (Cantor, 1839) is mentioned in the national herpetofaunal checklists of Bangladesh (Khan 1988; Kabir *et al.* 2009); no specific locality records have been provided.

Xenochrophis cerasogaster (Figure 1) is a medium-sized snake with a maximum total length of 970 mm. It has a cylindrical body, narrow head, elongated pupil, and nostril in single nasal. Dorsal scales are strongly keeled in 19-19-17 rows, ventral rounded ranging 144–148 in males and 153–159 in females. A very distinctive snake, it has an olive brown to greenish brown or russet dorsum and a reddish venter (Schleich and Kästle 2002).

Xenochrophis cerasogaster is a little-known snake with limited geographical range. Literature reviews reveal the geographic range of this species to be Bengal, Assam (Khasi Hills) in Indio-Malay Peninsula, Malaysia (Günther 1864; Boulenger 1890). Wall (1923) mentioned this species from Ganga valley, Fyzabad, Purnia (now in Bihar), Assam, and Khasi Hills in India. Smith (1943) mentioned it from Fyzabad (Uttar Pradesh), Bengal, Khasi Hills, Goalpara (Assam) in India. Khan (2004) added Pakistan to its range.

We present herein the first specific locality record of *X. cerasogaster* from Bangladesh, from the Patuakhali district in Barisal Division (Figure 2). The snake was found at the offshore of Char Kajol islands (22°5'42.50" N, 90°30'12.60" E) falling under bio-ecological Zone 8b (Nishat *et al.* 2002). Char Kajol is an island in the river Tetulia. This locality

extends the range of the species *ca.* 230 km SE (aerial distance) from the closest known area (Calcutta; see, Malnate and Minton 1965). The snake was located in a wetland, with dense aquatic vegetation (*Enhydra fluctuans*, *Nymphaea nouchali*). It was observed on 10 August 2009, at around 10:00 h on floating vegetation. Since the species is considered vulnerable in Bangladesh (Kabir *et al.* 2009), no specimen was collected from the study site. Rather voucher photographs were taken from a distance of about four meters with a Sony Cyber Shot DSC -H50 camera. One of these photographs (ZRC(IMG) 2.123) is deposited at the zoological image collection of the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research, Department of Biological Sciences, National University of Singapore.



FIGURE 1. *Xenochrophis cerasogaster* amongst aquatic vegetation from Chor Kajol, Bangladesh.

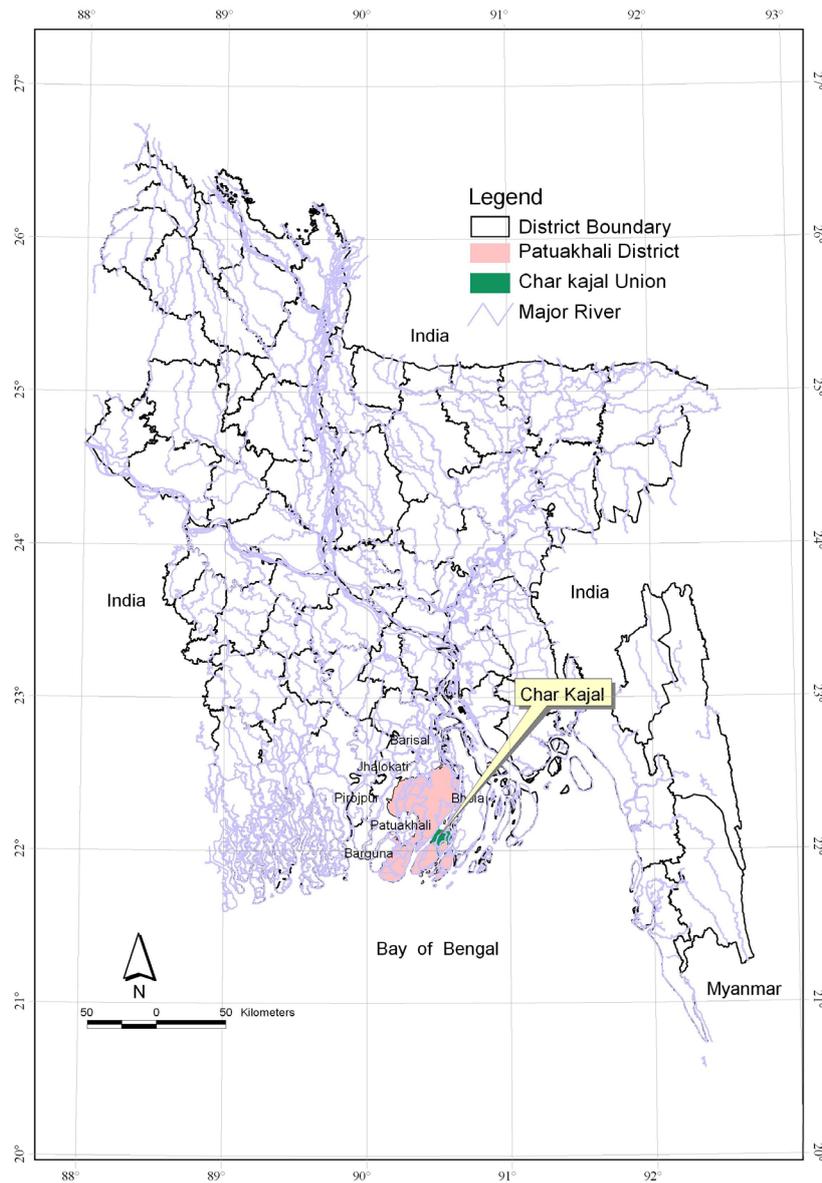


FIGURE 2. A map of Bangladesh showing the new locality of *Xenochrophis cerasogaster*.

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