



A Not-so-rare Species: Sightings of Mandarin Ratsnakes, *Euprepiophis mandarinus* (Cantor 1842), in the Zunheboto District of Nagaland, India

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The Mandarin Ratsnake (*Euprepiophis mandarinus*) is a non-venomous colubrid native to China (including Taiwan), Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, and a few localities in India (Ji et al. 2012). The species occurs in subtropical and montane forests and agricultural areas, where these constrictors feed largely on small mammals (Whitaker and Captain 2004).

The species' distribution has been well studied in China but these snakes are observed infrequently elsewhere in their range (Ji et al. 2012). One recent sighting (Zeigler et al. 2014) documented the presence of the species in northern Vietnam. In India, Whitaker and Captain (2004) presented records from the eastern parts of Arunachal Pradesh, Matthew (2005) recorded the species for the first time in the state of Nagaland, and Bhupathy et al. (2013) documented it for the second time in Nagaland.

At 1209 h on 14 June 2017, four years after the most recent previous sighting, a faunal survey recorded a Mandarin Ratsnake (Fig. 1A) in the village of Kivikhu, Zunheboto District, Nagaland (25°50'32.61"N, 94°30'0.72"E, elev. 1,155 m). The senior author found a dead individual (Fig. 1B) at 0800 h on 27 November 2017 on the Sataka-to-Kivikhu road, also in the Zunheboto District. More recently, at 0822 h on 9 May 2018, a juvenile (Fig. 1C) was recorded in the village of Kivikhu.

These multiple sightings in a relatively small area are suggestive of a potentially healthy population of Mandarin Ratsnakes in the Zunheboto District of Nagaland. Especially in light of population declines in China (Wang and Xie 2009), the need for additional surveys to better understand the distribution of the species in Nagaland and neighboring states of northeastern India is critical.



Fig. 1. New records of Mandarin Ratsnakes (*Euprepiophis mandarinus*) from the Zunheboto District, Nagaland, India. (A) An individual from Kivikhu Village. (B) A dead snake encountered on the Sataka-to-Kivikhu road. (C) A juvenile from Kivikhu Village. Photographs by Vihoto Kiba (A & C) and Yatish Lele (B).

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