NOTES ON HERPETOFAUNA OF TALCHHAPAR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, RAJASTHAN, INDIA

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Talchhapar wildlife sanctuary, popularly called "Talchhapar black buck Sanctuary", is located between 27° 48' 38" N latitude and 74° 26' 88" E longitude in Sujangarh taluka of Churu district of Rajasthan, covering an area of 7.19 sq. km. In 1962 it was first established as a protected area and was later declared as a wild life sanctuary in 1981 by the Rajasthan Government.

This sanctuary comes under the Thar desert portion of Rajasthan and the entire area of the sanctuary is a flat saline depression of clayey soil with human settlements, agricultural fields and sand dunes outside its boundary. The climate is characterized by extremes of temperature which sometimes touches 50° C during day time in summer and falls upto -2° C during chilly winter night accompanied by frequent droughts. Annual rainfall is about 300 mm generally during the months of July - September.

The vegetation of the sanctuary includes ground cover of grasses with a few shrub and tree species. The grasses include *Cyperus rotundus* (Mothia), *Chloris virgiata* (Ghora moth), *Desmostachya bipinnata* (Dhab), *Cenchrus biflorus* (Bhurat), and *Cynodon dactylon (*Dhoob*)*. Associated with these grasses, a shrub *Haloxylon salicornicum* (Lana) profusely grows in the sanctuary. The trees which flourish inside the sanctuary include *Prosopis chilensis* (Angreji bavanlio), *Acacia nilotica* (Desi babul), *Ziziphus nummularia* (Berr), *Salvadora persica* (Mithijal), and *Azardirachta indica* (Neem).

Herpetofauna

A total of 13 herpetofaunal species was found to occur during the study period (2002 & 2003) of which 2 species of amphibians and 6 species of reptiles were recorded within the sanctuary and its adjacent area within 1 km. range. Another 5 species of reptiles were recorded in the surrounding area within 5 km. range from the sanctuary area (Table-1).

From the ecological point of view the sanctuary is ideal habitat for the endangered, the spiny-tailed lizards (*Uromastix hardwicki*) as the frequency of occurrence was found to be very high in comparison with other reptilian species during the study period. The occurrence of good numbers of marbled toad (*Bufo stomaticus*) during the severe drought in 2003 near Chhapar village and also along road side drains of the sanctuary suggests that these habitats are preferred by this toad.

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Table - 1: List of Amphibians and Reptiles in Talchhapar sanctuary and its surrounding area

Family	Name of species	Common	Site of observation *	Time of activity
AMPHIBIANS Bufonidae	*Bufo stomaticus* Lutken, 1862	Marbled toad	S - 1	Mostly Night
Ranidae	*Euphlyctis cyanophlyctis* (Schneider, 1799)	Skittering frog	S - 1	Both day and night
REPTILES Gekkonidae	*Hemidactylus flaviviridies* Ruppell, 1835	Yellow - belliedhouse gecko	S - 1	Night
	Stenodactylus orientalis Blanford, 1876	Desert sand gecko	S - 3	Night
Agamidae	*Calotes versicolor* (Daudin, 1802)	Indian garden lizard	S - 1	Day
	Uromastix hardwicki Gray, 1827	Spiny-tailed lizard	S - 1	Day
Lacertidae	*Acanthodactylus cantoris cantoris* Gunther, 1864	Indian fringe - toed sand lizard	S - 2	Day
Varanidae	*Varanus bengalensis* (Linnaeus, 1758)	Common Indian monitor	S - 1 & 2	Day
	Varanus griseus (Daudin, 1803)	Desert monitor	S - 3	Day
Boidae	*Eryx johni* (Russell, 1801)	Indian sand boa	S - 2	Night
Elapidae	*Naja naja oxiana* (Eichwald, 1831)	Black cobra	S - 1	Night
	Bungarus caeruleus (Schneider, 1801)	Common Indian krait	S - 1	Night
Viperidae	*Echis carinatus* (Scheneider, 1801)	Saw scaled viper	S - 3	Night

* S - 1: The sanctuary and its adjacent area within 1 km. range; S - 2: Sand dunes side by Talchhapar to Bidasar state highway approx. 4 km. From the sanctuary (27° 48' 30" N; 74° 23' 36" E); S - 3: Sand dunes near Bitiavas aprox. 5 km from the sanctuary (27° 50' 58"N; 74° 28' 07" E)

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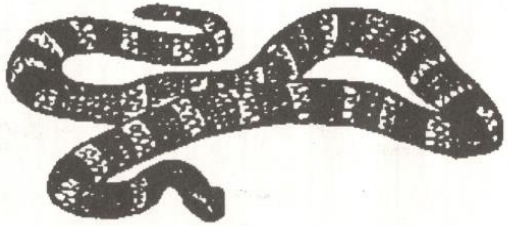
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