

# NEW SNAKE SPECIES FOUND IN ARUNACHAL

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Trachischium apteii | Photo Credit: [Special Arrangement](#)

Researchers have discovered a new species of non-venomous burrowing snake in Arunachal Pradesh, named *Trachischium apteii*. It was found under fallen logs inside a thickly forested area of the Tally Valley Wildlife Sanctuary near the town of Ziro in Arunachal Pradesh during a field expedition by researchers in July 2019.

“Three specimens of the new species were found in field that helped diagnose the new species,” states the paper published by three researchers — Harshal Bhonsle, Gaurang Gowande and Zeeshan Mirza — in the international science journal *Comptes Rendus Biologies*.

While Mr. Bhonsle is associated with the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Mumbai, Mr. Gowande is associated with Pune’s Fergusson College, and Mr. Mirza works with the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Bengaluru. Mr. Mirza said that the newly discovered species belongs to a group of fossorial snakes that live mostly underground, and surface mainly during or after a heavy monsoon shower.

Experts behind the discovery suggested that due to the burrowing habits of species of this genus, snakes belonging to the group are seldom seen and hence remain poorly studied. This could have been one of the reasons that the species had eluded the researchers.

*Trachischium apteii* was named so to honour the contribution of Deepak Apte, well-known marine biologist and Director of the BNHS. *Trachischium* species are commonly called slender snakes, and are currently known by seven species that are distributed across the Himalayas, and the Indo-Burma and Indo-China regions.

Morphologically, the snake is distinguished by smooth and dorsal scales arranged in 15 rows throughout the body. The dorsal colour of the holotype is dark brown to black with faint dorsal longitudinal lines. Large-sized members of the genus measure about 293 mm to 299 mm (measuring less than a foot, that is 300 mm or 30 cm).

Researchers behind the discovery, who covered large tracts of forested land in northeast India, said that they have documented more species from the forests of Arunachal Pradesh, which is likely to yield new species. Work is underway to describe them.

Underlining that forests across northeast India have not been well-explored for their biodiversity, especially reptiles, amphibians and most invertebrate groups, the authors have said that “anthropogenic pressures like road widening, construction of dams and hydropower plants threaten the forest and biodiversity across Arunachal Pradesh”.

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