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Study on Herpetofauna in district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh, India

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Abstract

Herpetofauna also play a crucial role in ecosystem function. They are important predators of many insects and agricultural pests and are therefore valuable for natural biological pests control. Herpetofauna are cold blooded vertebrates with smooth skin. The study was carried out during May 2024 to August 2025 (16Months), with an aim to determine the diversity, distribution and natural history information in district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh. During our survey contains 14 species of herpetofauna including 3 species of class Amphibia of order Anura and 3 family (Dicroglossidae, Ranidae, Bufonidae), 10 species of class Reptilia of one order (Squamata), 2 suborder (Lacertilia and Ophidia) and 5 family (Geckonidae, Scincidae, Elapidae, Boidae and Colubridae).One species of Turtles were recorded. A large number of species still being described, highlight the need for a more concreted scientific study in district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh as well as a need for greater protection of the habitat that remains.

Keywords: Amphibia, Reptilia, Herpetofauna, Gonda, Uttar Pradesh

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Introduction

They have been several efforts to create inventories of Indian reptiles which are collations of documentation, finding and records of individual herpetologist (Smith, 1931, Whitaker and Captain, 2004), Herpetofauna include amphibians and reptiles. Amphibians are poikilothermic (Cold blooded) vertebrates with smooth skin leading a bimodal life that is life in water as well as land. The three modern order of amphibians are Anura (tail and limbless animals

like toads and frogs), Caudata (tailless animals that is Salamanders and newts) and Gymnophiona (Caencilians, limbless amphibians that is resemble snakes), Reptiles found in almost all parts of the world, except the very cold regions. In India reptiles have their three representatives orders Crocodylia (Crocodiles), Testified (turtles and tortoises) and Squamata (Lizards and snakes). The diversified climate ,varying vegetation and different types of soil in the country form a wide range of biotopes that support a highly diversified herpetofauna. The Western Ghats, Eastern Himalaya and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are endowed with varied and unique herpetofauna.

Herpetofauna (Amphibians and Reptiles also play a crucial role in ecosystem function. They are important predators of many insects and agricultural pests and are therefore, valuable for natural biological pests control. According to Zoological survey of India (ZSI) there are 860 species of herpetofauna occurring in India. Out 860 species,518 species of reptiles which include there species of crocodiles, 34 species of turtles and tortoises, 202 species of lizards and 279 species of snakes belonging to 28 families .Of the 518 species of reptiles found in India, newly 192 species are endemic to India. Out of these 26 species have been listed as Threatened in the IUCN Red List of Threatened animals (IUCN, 2006). Out of the 342 species of Amphibians known from India.161 are still under the data deficient category. As per the IUCN Red list of Threatened species, the global status of Indian amphibian is 24% data defivient 30% least concern, 9% Endangered, 6% Threatened, 5% critically endangered, 2% near threatened and 0.3% extinct. Only two Indian species of frogs are included in Appendix-II.

Several workers have been published either on the Indian or regional snakes by K.G. Gharpurey (1954) in Snakes of India. P.J. Deoras (1965) in snakes of India., R.Whitaker (1978) in Common Indian Snakes: a field guide ,Murthy(1986) in snakes book of India. J.C.Daniel (1983) in the book of Indian reptiles and The book of Indian Reptiles and Amphibians. R.C.Sharma (2004) in Handbook: Indian snakes. Most comprehensive and authoritative guide on Snakes of India is by Whitaker and Captain (2004) as Snakes of India-the field guide. The book describes 157 species of snakes out of the 272 species found in present India. Indraneil Das (1997, 2002) produced diverse works of national and International importance including books such as "Biogeography" of reptiles of South Asia (1996) and "A Photographic guide to the snakes and other reptiles of India (2002). The Turtles and Tortoises of Indian subcontinent by Das (1955) is still considered as one of the most comprehensive works on Indian testudines.

Buff-striped Keelbacks (*Amphiesma stolatum*) are non-poisonous natricid snakes that ranges throughout the Indian subcontinent. These predominantly diurnal snakes are most frequently encountered during the rainy season (June-September) when males are searching for mates and females are laying eggs (Whitaker and Captain, 2004, Pryce et. al., 2016). Typical dorsal ground colour of the head and body is olive-brown to gray with two chrome-yellow dorso-lateral lines and a series of blacks crossbands, sides of the head are either yellow or white, the ventral is pale-yellowish or cream. During the mating season, female temporarily acquire some reddish colouration around the neck.

Uttar Pradesh is bounded on the Shivalik Range which forms the southern foothills of the Himalayas, slopes down in to a boulder bed called Bhabhar, the transitional belt running along the entire length of the state is called the Terai and Bhabhar area. It has rich forests, cutting across it are innumerable streams which swell in to ranging torrents during the monsoon. The Climate of the Uttar Pradesh state is tropical monsoon. The average temperature varies in the plains from 3 to 4 ℃ in January to 43 to 45 ℃ in May and June. There are three distinct seasons-winter from October to February, summer from March to mid June and the rainy season from June to September.

The Survey include district Gonda of Uttar Pradesh, India which will be divide in to four

different Zones namely - 4 Tehsils- Gonda, Mankapur, Colonelganj and Tarabganj. Each Tehsil of a zone further divided into different habitat types viz. forests, croplands, aquatic bodies (ponds, lakes, dams, river bank and wetlands), rural areas, forest area and urban area. The study area included protected area, non protected areas, river, lakes, forest, temple ponds and the fringe areas including gardens, paddy and human habitations.

Past studies on Herpetofauna include those of Wall (1923), Gunther and Albert (1864), Morgan (1973), Srivastava (1981), Javed and Hanger (1995), Dutta(1997), Murthi (1986), Wake (1991), Dutta (1997), Chanda (2002), Singh (2003), Cushman (2006), Vogel and David (2006), Saikia et.al.(2007) Sharma(2007), Rooijen and Vogel (2008), Dutta et.al. (2009), Mohapatra et.al. (2009), Tripathi and Singh (2009), Dinesh et.al (2011), Das et.al.(2012), Gururaja (2012), Dinesh et.al.(2013), Karthik (2017), Hallermann et.al.(2001),Whitaker and Captain(2004), Basu (1989), Sankaran (1989), Talukdar and Dasgupta (1977). Singh (1978), Herpetofauna of Uttar Pradesh, a total 93 species of herpetofauna including 70 species of reptiles of 3 order (Squamata, Testudines, Crocodilia), 3 suborders (Ophidia, Cryptodira, Sauria/Lacertilia),15 families and 23 species of Amphibians including 1 order (Anura), 5 families. Among the reptiles 38 are snakes (18 Venomous, 20 nonvenomous), Crocodiles and Gharials, 18 turtles and 12 lizards were recorded (Abhijit et.al. 2012).

Location and Morphometry of district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh

Gonda district is located between 26.41 to 27.51 degrees north latitude and 81.30 to 82.06 degrees east longitude. The total area of the district is 4003 Square Km., which is 28.13% of the total area of Devipatan division. There are 04 Tehsils in this district, Gonda, Mankapur, Colonelganj and Tarabganj.

Gonda is one of the districts of Uttar Pradesh, India. Gonda is the district headquarters and also the administrative centre for the Devipatan division. Gonda is bounded by Shravasti district to the north, Balrampur and Siddharth nagar districts to the north-east,Basti district to the east, Faizabad district to the South, Barabanki district to the South-west and Bahraich district to the North-west. The district is decorated with its historical glory, It has been leader of the Country's independence movement. King Devi Bakash Singh of this country was a brave warrior and patriot king, who also fought with the Britishers in the freedom movement, to save his life and his family gave. The Sagra pond constructed by them is still increasing the beauty of the city.

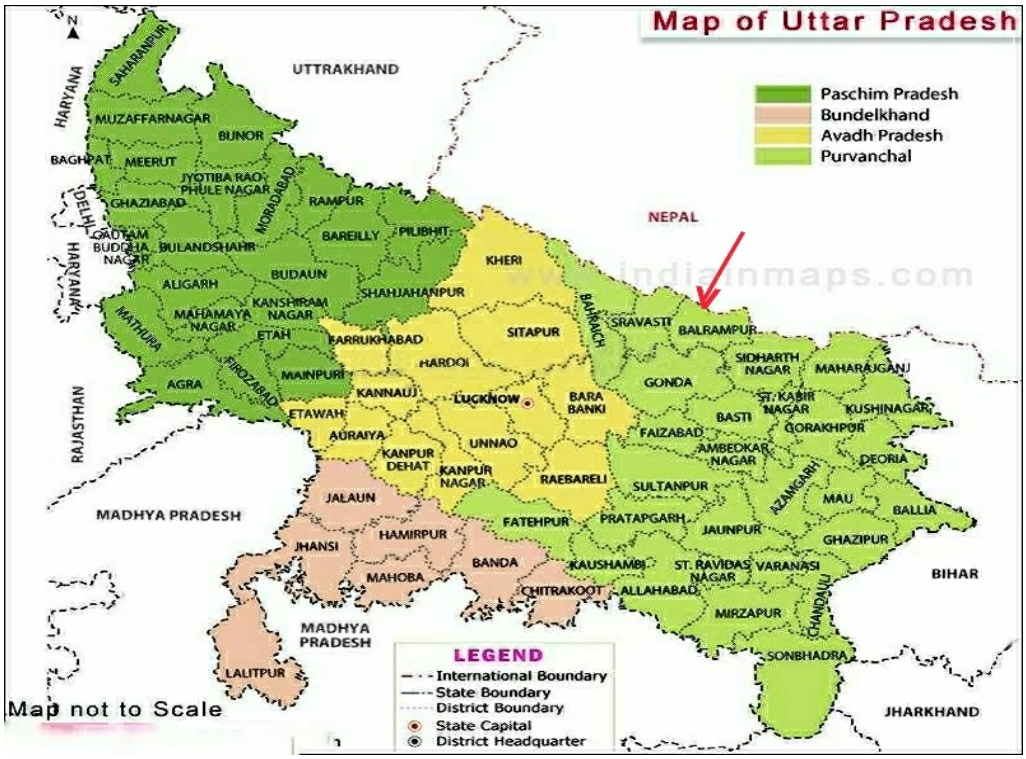
In the district there are three streams of Ghaghra, Saryu and Kuano. Apart from this, Bisuhi Manavar and Tedhi seasonal river Ghagra river flows east which forms the Southern boundary of the district, from the South-west direction of the Saryu river district, the development block enters the Colonelganj and joins the Ghaghra river near Paska.

In the district, Barahi Devi, Khaira Bhavani and Shankar Ji, Dukhran Nath Temple and Prithvi Nath Temple are holding their heritage from long periods. There is a lot of backward districts of the district, East Janpada Tehsil Colonelganj and Tarabganj are situated in the foothills of Saryu and Ghaghra, that is why this there is an equal probability of flood and droughts in the area, nevertheless, this region in fertile due to naturalisticness.

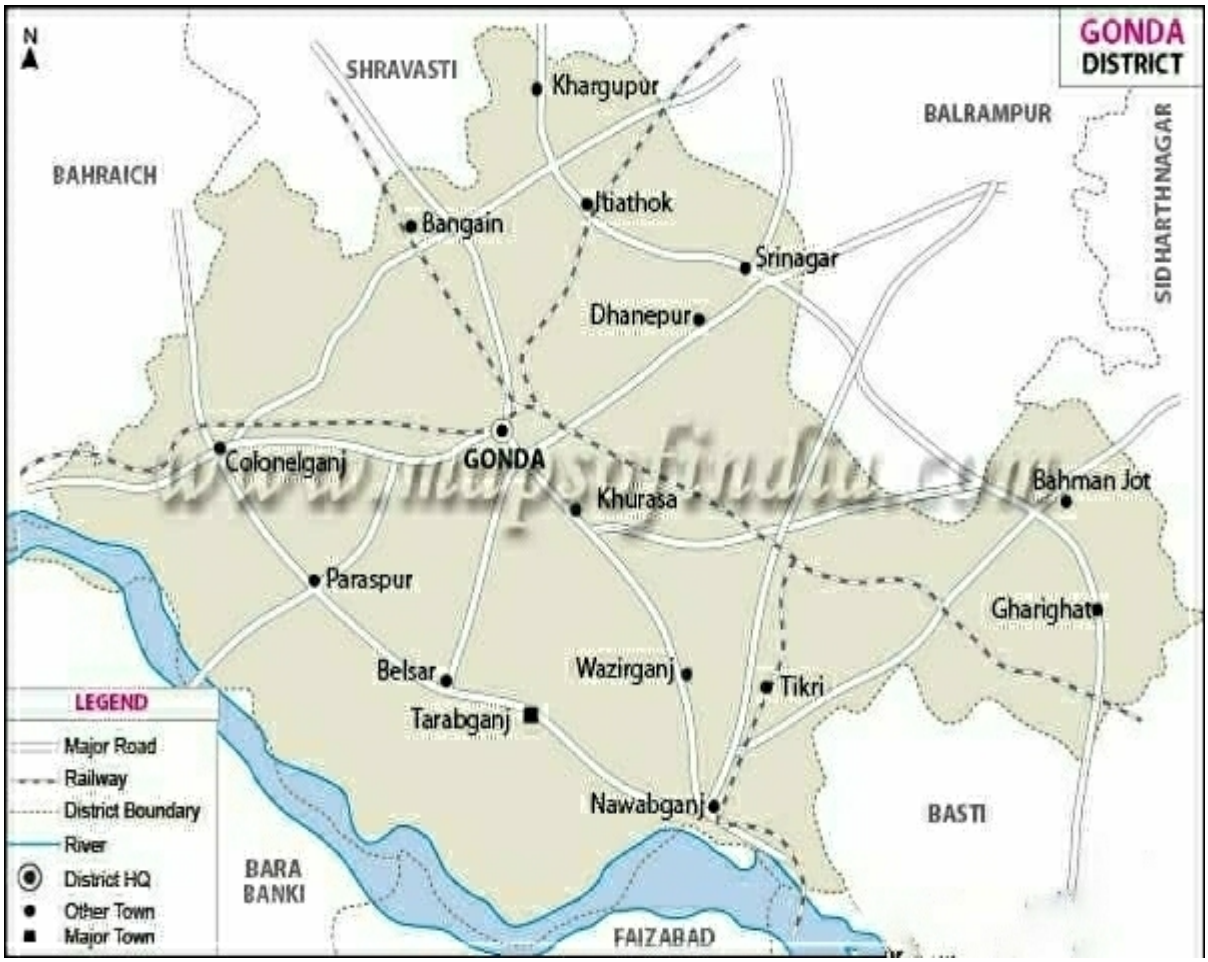
Historically, Swaminarayan Chhapia Temple of Gonda district is famous for its grandeur and beauty.Lord Swaminarayan was born as Ghanshyam Pandey in 1781 in Chhapia, Uttar Pradesh. In 1792, he began a seven year pilgrimage across India at the age of 11, adopting the name Nilkantha Varni.

In district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh our survey Herpetofauna during the period of 16 Months in four Tehsil were recorded and documented (Map-1, 2 & 3).

Map-1: Location of study area in India



Map-2: Location of Study area in Uttar Pradesh



Map-3: Location of study area in district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh

Materials and Methods

The study was carried out during May 2024 to August 2025, with an aim to determine the diversity, distribution and natural history information in Uttar Pradesh. Field surveys were carried out during day time. During the extensive survey, we carried out visual inspection of forest floor, shrubs, grasses and wetlands. All possible ecotones were searched thoroughly including such areas which often attract Amphibians and reptiles for food shelter or breeding .We go through all the grey literature, Museum Specimens of Zoology, D.A.V.P.G.College, Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, record the data from Previous work which helped us to make the authentic record of Herpetofauna.

We looked for turtles and tortoise during 8:00AM to 11:00 AM and in the afternoon 3:30 PM to 5:30 PM. While looking for basking or active reptiles we visually recorded the habitat to be surveyed in the afternoon. Occasionally turtles at distance were observed through binoculars (20×50) and spotting scope (30X). Whenever possible individuals were caught, photographed with aid of 1100 D SLR Camera and measured for future reference and released back. Turtle shells were observed at different localities -protection camps inside the park and also from the villages. Data sheet was filled in to record-date, time, specific locality, latitude, longitude and latitude (recorded using a Garmin GPS), habitat type, habitat description, morphological measurements, weather such as temperature and humidity, detailed live colouration and natural history as well as other important field notes were taken for most of the animals we observed. Photograph were taken in natural condition for additional information (Fig.-1).

Snake Charmer helped us to locate the particular area of conditions of snakes habitats or presence or absence of snakes. Forest staffs based in the camps inside the park and communities living on the fringe villages were interviewed to get more information about Herpetofauna. All species encountered are identified up to species level using keys and other publications (Gunther, 1864, Boulenger, 1890, Smith, 1931, 1935, 1943, Dutta, 1997, Bossuyt, 2002, Daniels, 2002, Daniels RJR, 2005, Giri and Bauer,2008, Whitakar and Captain, 2008, Aengals et.al.2012, Gururaja, 2012) and the assessment of threat status of the observed species in the area was based on IUCN red list (2013).

Fig.-1: Capturing Photos by Investigator for Study of Herpetofauna in district Gonda,Uttar Pradesh, India

Table-1: List of Herpetofauna reported from district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh (Data of May 2024 to August 2025)

S.No.	Class	Scientific Name	Common Name	Order	Family
1	**Amphibia**	*Rana tigrina*	Indian frog	Anura	Ranidae
2		*Duttaphrynus melanostictus,*	Common Toad	Anura	Bufonidae
3		*Euphlyctis cyanophlyctis*	Skittering Frog	Anura	Dicroglossidae
4	**Reptilia (Lizard)**	*Hemidactylus flaviviridis*	House Gecko	Squamata	Gecknoidae
5		*Hemidactylus brookii*	Brook's Gecko	Squamata	Gecknoidae
6		*Eutropis carinata*	Common Brahminy Skink	Squamata	Scincidae
7		*Lygosoma Punctata*	Snake Skink	Squamata	Scincidae

8	**Reptilia (Snakes)**	*Naja-naja* (Poisonous)	Phitara	Squamata	Elapidae
9		*Bungarus caeruleus* (Poisonous)	Common Krait	Squamata	Elapidae
10		*Eryx johnii* (Non-poisonous)	Two headed Snake	Squamata	Boidae
11		*Ptyas mucosa* (Non-poisonous)	Dhaman Or Indian rat Snake	Squamata	Colubridae
12		*Eryx conicus* (Non-poisonous)	Mitti Wala Saanp	Squamata	Boidae
13		*Amphiesma stolatum*	Buff Striped Keelback	Squamata	Colubridae
14	**Reptilia (Turtle)**	*Lissemys punctata andersoni*	Indian Mud Turtle	Testudines	Trionychidae

V: Some Herpetofauna images reported from district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh, India

Amphibia

Images-1: *Rana tigrina* (Indian frog)

Image-2: *Duttaphrynus melanostictus* (Common Indian toad)

Images- 3: *Euphlyctis cyanophlyctis* (Common skittering frog)

Reptilia

Lizards species

Image-4: ***Hemidactylus flaviviridis***

Image-5: ***Hemidactylus brooki***

Image-6: *Eutropis carinata* (Schneider,1801)

Image-7: *Lygosoma punctata* (Das, 1996)

Snakes Species

Image-8: *Naja-naja* (Cobra, Poisonous, Neurotoxic)

Image-9: *Bungarus caeruleus* (Krait, Poisonous, Neurotoxic)

Image-10: *Eryx johnii* (Two headed Snake: Non-poisonous)

Image-11: *Ptyas mucosa* (Dhaman, Non-poisonous)

Image-12: *Eryx conicus* (Common Rough tailed sand Boa, Non-poisonous)

Image-13: *Amphiesma stolatum* (Buff striped Keelback,Non-poisonous)

Turtle

Image-14: *Lissemys punctata* Anderson (Indian flap mud turtle)

Results

Present our Survey during the period of May 2024 to August 2025 (16 Months) of Herpetofauna of district Gonda Uttar Pradesh .Around district Gonda in 04 Tehsil contains 14 species of herpetofauna including 3 species of Class-Amphibia of order Anura and 3 family-(Dicroglossidae, Ranidae, Bufonidae).10 species of Class-Reptilia of one order (Squamata), 2 sub-order (Lacertilia and Ophidia) and 5 family (Geckonidae, Scincidae, Elapidae Boidae, Colubridae). One species of Turtle (Order-Testudine and family Trionychidae) and one genera of turtle (Image-1-14).

A: Species of Amphibians

1. *Rana tigrina,* (Daudin, 1802) (*Hoplobatrachus tigerinus*, Daudin, 1802),

Family - Ranidae: *Rana tigrina* also known as the Indian frog (*Hoplobatrachus tigerinus*) has been found in district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh, Reported in Tehsils- Gonda, Colonelganj, Tarabganj and Man kapur). *H.tigerinus* is mainly aquatic and lives in freshwater wetlands, both natural and artificial. They are mostly solitary and nocturnal, inhabiting holes and bushes near permanent water courses and pools. *H.tigerinus* abundantly reported from Nawabganj town, Mankapur City, Khargupur Bazar and Itiyathok Bazar of district Gonda (Image-2).

2. *Duttaphrynus melanostictus* (Schneider, 1799), Family-Bufonidae

During our survey common Indian toad reported from block-Belsar, Chhapia, Colonelganj, Itiathok, Katrabazar, Mujehna and Paraspur of district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh, India. Frequently encountered in and around human habitations, plantations,under rocks, wood piles and road side areas (Image-2).

3. *Euphlyctis cyanophyctis* (Schneider, 1799), Family- Dicroglossidae:

Frequently encountered in lentic and lotic habitats in and around block-Wazirganj, Rupaidih, Pandrikripal, Mujehna and Nawabganj of district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh. The species is used as fishing bait in the fringe areas(Image-3).

B: Species of Class-Reptilia

4. *Hemidactylus flaviviridis* (Rupell, 1835), Family-Geckonidae:

During our survey House Gecko reported from around district Gonda near Base camp, watch Tower, Individual also observed on Ficus tree bark at 160 cm height and under woodpiles near houses. This is the common house Gecko (Image-4).

5. *Hemidactylus brookii* (Gray, 1845), Family-Geckonidae:

During our survey it is mostly reported from Tehsil Tarabganjarea. Individuals were found inhibiting house walls up to 3 m from the ground. However, majority of the encounters are from low walls, culverts and on the ground. Gravid females observed in the month of June 2024 (Image-5).

6. *Eutropis carinata* (Schneider, 1801), Family-Scincidae: Observed from 04 Tehsils of district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh, India during June 2024.A single individual was foraging among leaf-litter of a teak plantation area close to human habitations(Image-6).

7. *Lygosoma punctata* (Das,1996), Family-Scincidae: Recorded from near the Belsar Village and Chandpur Village, Block-Belsar, district Honda Uttar Pradesh during July-2024. The Individual was found among accumulated leaf-litter near degraded grassland and plantation area at around 09:00 AM (Image-7)

8. *Naja-naja* (Linnaeus, 1758), Family-Elapidae:

During our survey it is reported from block-Paraspur of district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh while it crossing a paved road surrounded by trees plantation area at 10:00 AM during August 2024.The second individual was killed when it entered human habitation near base camp. This Poisonous species locally known as "Phitara" snake (Image-8).

9. *Bungarus caeruleus* (Schneider,1801), Family- Elapidae:

During our survey it is reported from mostly Tehsils Tarabganj Villages, One individual was observed near Singhpur Village, Block-Belsar of district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh , found old house at night and hidden bark of trees. It is mostly found which area is surrounded by human habitation. It is Locally known as "Krait' (Image-9). It is a Poisonous Snake.

10. *Eryx johnii* (Smith, 1943), Family-Boidae:

During our Survey,it is reported from Umari Begamganj block-Belsar, district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh, found in old house burrow, nocturnal, lives in burrow most of the time, live in dry and sandy desert area. Locally known as "Do Muh Wala Saanp" (Image-10).

11. *Ptyas mucosa* (Linnaeus, 1758), Family-Colubridae:

It is reported mostly in Tehsil Tarabganj and Mankapur of district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh, It is found human habitation, near Village ponds and grassland during July 2025. Locally known as "Dhamin" (Image-11).

12. *Eryx conicus* (Schneider, 1801), Family-Boidae:

Recorded from near agricultural fields at Village Balpur, block and district of Gonda, Uttar Pradesh, during August -2024. Locally known as "Mitti Wala Saanp or Bahira Saanp (Image-12).

13. *Amphiesma stolatum* (Linnaeus, 1758), Family-Colubridae:

First sighting is from the Village- Singhpur, Block-Belsar and Tehsil- Tarabganj, district-Gonda, Uttar Pradesh. It was moving among leaflitter of a teak area during June 2025 (Image-13).

14. Turtle:

***Lissemys punctata andersoni* (Webb, 1980), Family-Trionychidae:**

During our survey Turtle was reported in near Tedhi Nadi of district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh, It is seen in the month of September 2024(Image-14).

Discussion

Based on field and literature records, the study documents 3 species of Amphibia (1-Order-Anura and 3-family- Ranidae, Bufonidae and Dicroglossidae) and 3 genera. 10 species of Class-Reptilia (1-order-Squamata and 5-family-Geckonidae, Scincidae, Elapidae, Boidae and Colubridae) and 10 genera. One species and genera of Turtle (Order-Testudines and family-Trionychidae) are documented.

During our survey in district Gonda (U.P.), The family-Colubridae (Dhaman) is the most abundant species all over of district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh. Family- Geckonidae, Order-Squamata (House Gecko) abundant in old houses of district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh region.

The similar record of Calotes maria, a Khasi Hill endemic agamid by Hallermann et.al (2001) and from Nishangada, Uttar Pradesh, need to be verified. As the Collection in that Paper also includes specimens collected from North-Eastern India and Northern-West Bengal, so we presume that records of *C.maria*, *E.multifasciata* and H.platyurus might have been collected from eastern India and the Collection localities are mistakenly recorded as “Nishangada.

Das et. al. (2012) a herpetofauna study in Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary and its environs, situated in the Terai region of Uttar Pradesh, India and total of 10 species of Amphibians and 42 species of reptiles are recorded from the area. Other worker in past also studies on herpetofauna in Uttar Pradesh include Hallermann et.al. (2001), Basu (1989) and Talukdar and Das Gupta (1977).

Among the reptiles 07 species are snakes (02 Venomous and 05 species are Non-venomous), one Turtle species and 05 lizards species and 3 species of Amphibia (Table-2: Image-1 to 16) during our survey of district Balrampur, Uttar Pradesh. According to percentage distribution of Herpetofauna of district Balrampur, Uttar Pradesh, India Snakes contribute maximum 40% Non-poisonous snakes and commonly found two (Krait and Phitara) poisonous snakes in district Balrampur Uttar Pradesh, Lizards contribute leat 48% and Amphibians contribute least 10% shown in Table-1.

Conclusion

Such work should make special efforts to identify distinctive and representative herpetological taxa of protected area or unique habitat to enhance and highlight their conservation value. Such key taxa can serve as indicator species for assessing the future conservation priorities and requirements of those areas. Though the conclusions are prepared based on the results of the present study, we endorse more research should be carried out in future in the present study area. Seasonal variation for amphibians and reptiles was projected to expand for the majority of species. A large number of species still being described, highlight the need for a more concreted scientific study in district Gonda, Uttar Pradesh as well as a need for greater protection of the habitat that remains.

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