



Xylophis deepaki

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Why in News

A tiny snake “**Xylophis deepaki**” has been named in honour of Indian herpetologist **Deepak Veerappan** for his contribution in erecting a new subfamily **Xylophiinae** to accommodate wood snakes.

The common name suggested for the species is '**Deepak's wood snake**'.



Key Points

- **About Xylophis deepaki:**
 - It is a **tiny snake of just 20 cm length** with **iridescent scales**.
 - It was first found on a **coconut plantation** in **Kanyakumari**.
 - It is now reported to be an **endemic species** of **Tamil Nadu** and also been sighted in some parts of the **southern Western Ghats**.
 - It is found in the **drier regions** and in **lower altitudes** around **Agasthyamalai hills**.

- **About Xylophis:**
 - It is a **small genus of snakes in the family Pareidae**.
 - It **has five species**, all of which are **endemic to the Western Ghats** in southern India.
 - **Five Species:** Xylophis Captaini, Xylophis deepaki, Xylophis Mosaicus, Xylophis Perroteri and Xylophis Stenorhynchus.
 - These five species constitute the **monotypic subfamily Xylophiinae**. They are the **only pareidae** snakes found in India and the only snakes in the family found outside Southeast Asia.
- **About Wood Snakes:**
 - These are **harmless (non-venomous), sub-fossorial** and often found while digging soil in farms and under the logs in the **Western Ghat forests**.
 - They feed on **earthworms** and possibly other **invertebrates**.
 - Their close relatives are found in **Northeast India** and **Southeast Asia** and are known to be **arboreal** (living in trees).
- **Related Information :**
 - According to the **IUCN Red List of Threatened Species**, **12% of assessed snake species** are listed as **threatened** and their populations are in **decline**.
 - Each year, **2.7 million** people around the world suffer a serious **snakebite envenomation**. The **World Health Organization (WHO)** classified **snakebite** as a **neglected tropical disease** to reduce snakebite in developing countries.
 - **Save The Snakes** is a **dedicated initiative** exclusively for **snake conservation** and **human-snake conflict mitigation**.

Agasthya Hills

- Agasthya hill is a 1,868-metre tall peak within **Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary**, in the **Western Ghats of Kerala**. The peak lies on the border of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. This peak is a part of the **Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve**.
- The peak is named after Hindu sage Agastya, who is considered to be one of the seven rishis (Saptarishi) of Hindu Puranas. It is a pilgrimage centre for devotees.
- The **Thamirabarani River** is a **perennial river** which originates from the eastern side of the range and flows into the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu.
- Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve is listed on **UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves (2016)**.

Source: TH