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Rescue and Hard release of Indian Rock Python (*Python molurus*)

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Abstract

Human–wildlife interactions are increasingly reported in areas where human settlements and institutional premises are located close to wildlife habitats. The Indian rock python (*Python molurus*) is an important reptilian species that plays a significant role in maintaining ecological balance. The present report describes the rescue and subsequent release of a large python found on the premises of the College of Veterinary Science, Assam Veterinary and Fishery University, Khanapara, Guwahati, Assam. The incident occurred at approximately 10:30 a.m., when the snake was observed moving near the rear side of the Dean's Seminar Room. The author, who had previously received wildlife rescue training and had experience in rescuing various wild animal species, undertook the rescue operation. The python was reported to weigh approximately 52 kg. Following capture, it was transported in a plastic bag and released near Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary. The operation highlights the importance of trained personnel, appropriate wildlife rescue practices, and the timely relocation of wild animals encountered in human-dominated areas. It also emphasizes the need for public awareness and conservation-oriented approaches to human–wildlife coexistence.

Keywords: *Indian rock python, wildlife rescue, snake rescue, hard release, Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary, human–wildlife conflict*

Introduction:

The Indian rock python (*Python molurus*) is a large, non-venomous constrictor native to the Indian subcontinent. It inhabits a variety of ecosystems, including forests, grasslands, wetlands, and areas

near water bodies. As a major predator, the species contributes to ecological balance by regulating populations of prey animals.

The species faces several threats, including habitat loss and fragmentation, illegal hunting, and exploitation for its skin and other body parts. The Indian rock python is listed as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List (Aengals *et al.*, 2021). Its conservation is therefore important for maintaining biodiversity and ecological stability.

Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary, located near the Assam Veterinary and Fishery University campus at Khanapara, Guwahati, supports diverse wildlife, including mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, fish, and invertebrates. The proximity of the sanctuary and other natural habitats to human settlements and institutional premises may occasionally result in encounters between wildlife and people. Snakes may enter such areas while searching for food, shelter, or suitable environmental conditions.

The safe rescue and appropriate release of snakes encountered in human-dominated environments are important for reducing unnecessary harm to both humans and wildlife. This report describes the rescue and release of a large Indian rock python found on the university campus.

Case Description: Rescue and Release of the Python:

At approximately 10:30 a.m., while approaching the university gate for an urgent purpose, the author noticed a group of people gathered behind the Dean's Seminar Room at the College of Veterinary Science, Khanapara. On approaching the gathering, a large python was observed moving around the area.



Fig.1. Photograph of Indian Rock Python rear side of Dean's Seminar Room.

A senior colleague asked the author whether he could capture the snake. The author agreed to undertake the rescue, drawing on his previous professional experience with wildlife rescue operations.

The author had previously worked as an Assistant Veterinary Surgeon with the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) for approximately one year and three months. During this period, he received wildlife rescue training in Noida, Uttar Pradesh, and participated in rescue operations involving various wild animal species, including snakes, elephants, and tigers. He also reported continuing to contribute voluntarily to wildlife rescue activities as a member of WTI's Emergency Response Network (ERN).

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During the operation, the author used a tree branch to restrain the python's head before securing it manually. The snake was then controlled by holding its head and tail. Subsequently, its head was introduced into a plastic bag, which was secured for transportation. The python was transported to a location near Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary and released successfully.



Fig.2. Photograph of Rescued Indian Rock Python rear side of Dean's Seminar Room.

The reported body weight of the python was approximately 52 kg. The snake was released by hard release method.



Fig.3. Photograph of Released Indian Rock Python near Amchang wildlife sanctuary.

Discussion:

The rescue illustrates the challenges associated with encounters between large snakes and people in areas situated close to wildlife habitats. Such encounters may generate fear among the public and can result in injury to the animal or people if handled improperly.

Indian rock pythons are ecologically important predators and should be protected from unnecessary killing or injury. Their presence near human settlements does not necessarily indicate aggressive behaviour; the animals may simply be moving through the landscape or seeking food and shelter.

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The author's previous experience and wildlife rescue training were relevant to the operation described here. Nevertheless, handling a large python can be dangerous because of its size and muscular strength. Rescue operations should be conducted only by appropriately trained and authorized personnel using suitable equipment, established safety protocols, and minimum necessary restraint. Manual handling, particularly restraint of the head, should not be interpreted as a general recommendation for untrained individuals.

The release of rescued wildlife also requires careful consideration. The release site should provide suitable habitat and should be selected in accordance with applicable wildlife regulations and guidance from the relevant forest or wildlife authorities. Where possible, the animal's condition, species identity, release location, and post-release outcome should be documented. The term “hard release” should be used only when the release method is clearly defined and accurately documented.

This incident further demonstrates the importance of awareness among students, staff, and the public regarding the conservation of snakes. Reporting wildlife sightings to trained rescue teams and avoiding unnecessary disturbance can help reduce risks to both humans and animals.

Conclusion:

The rescue and release of the approximately 52-kg python from the premises of the College of Veterinary Science, Assam Veterinary and Fishery University, Khanapara, highlights the importance of trained wildlife rescue personnel and responsible responses to human–wildlife encounters. The Indian rock python plays an important ecological role and deserves protection as part of the region’s biodiversity.

Public awareness, habitat conservation, compliance with wildlife regulations, and collaboration between veterinary professionals, wildlife rescue organizations, and forest authorities are essential for promoting the safe coexistence of humans and wild animals.

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