

detection and rapid response' of habitat loss and alterations could prevent the loss of biodiversity.

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## Need for conservation of common sand boa (*Eryx conicus*) (Schneider 1801)

The common sand boa (*Eryx conicus*) species was found during a reptile survey in the riparian area of Ousteri Lake. The total area of lake spreads over 390 ha and its eastern portion stretches around 3 km, with a variety of natural vegetation as well as faunal diversity. The common sand boa is brilliant-coloured with short, thick body, keeled scales, rough tail and prominent, blotched pattern and average length of 35 cm. The overall colour of the common sand boa varies from yellowish-white to dark brown, with irregular spots of reddish brown to black forming an uneven chain down the back. They are short snakes with a rough tail and a square nose (Figure 1).

The riparian habitat and its associated diverse species represent an important

component in ecosystem management<sup>1</sup>. The common sand boa is being threatened due to loss of habitat, fragmentation, hunting, trade in local and commercial markets, and human interference<sup>2</sup>. These snakes have been listed under IUCN category as lower risk near threatened, but may become an endangered species<sup>3</sup>.

In spite of the flourishing pet trade, rumours that the snake is in demand for cancer research in Western countries has fuelled rampant trafficking ([www.greenosai.org/.../34-sand-boa-facts-and-myths.html](http://www.greenosai.org/.../34-sand-boa-facts-and-myths.html)). Since the forests are well protected, the trappers and smugglers are targeting the farmlands where they are commonly found. The sand boas have been categorized under Schedule IV of

the Wildlife Protection Act. In India, capturing and involvement in any kind of trade of these reptiles is punishable under this Act (<http://www.greenosai.org/environment/diversity/34-sand-boa-facts-and-myths.html> downloaded on 2 November 2010). Preserving the reptiles of the Ousteri Lake area should be treated as a critical conservation goal. Habitat loss, illegal encroachment of agriculture, and poaching are the biggest threats to the common sand boas in the Ousteri Lake area. This study emphasizes that there is an urgent need to protect and conserve as well as create awareness among local people about common sand boas in and around Ousteri Lake.



**Figure 1.** Common sand boa (*Eryx conicus*).

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