



Xylophis Deepaki

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- A new snake species 'Xylophis deepaki' discovered recently in the western Ghats region of Tamil Nadu. The species is named in honour of Indian herpetologist Deepak Veerappan for his contribution in erecting a new subfamily 'Xylophiinae' to accommodate wood snakes.
- It is a tiny snake of just 20 cm length with iridescent scales. It first stumbled upon in a coconut plantation in Kanyakumari, is now reported to be an endemic species of Tamil Nadu.
- The snake was previously confused with *X. captaini*, but detailed morphological studies showed that it was indeed a new species and was a close relative to *X. captaini*. Close relatives of wood snakes are found in northeast India and South-east Asia and are known to be arboreal.
- Wood snakes are harmless, 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. The new find increases the total number of currently recognized wood snakes to five species.

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