

Caspian Cobra

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Conservation

Why in News?

A rare Caspian Cobra has been spotted in the upper forest range of Chamba district in Himachal Pradesh, recently.

- **Scientific Name** - *Naja oxiana*
- **Family** - Elapidae.
- The Caspian Cobra also known as the Central Asian, Oxus, or Russian cobra is **endemic to Central Asia**.
- **Geographic Distribution** - It is typically found across Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and northern Pakistan.
- **Indian Footprint** - Historically considered exceptionally rare, confined mostly to far northwestern pockets including parts of Jammu & Kashmir and localized ranges in Himachal Pradesh.
- **Preferred Habitat** - The Caspian Cobra thrives in **arid and semi-arid landscapes**, rocky or stony foothills, embankments, and scrublands.
- **Behaviour** - It is a highly capable climber and swimmer, frequently utilizing holes in embankments or trees for shelter.
- **Key characteristics**
 - Its hood is **elongated and gradually tapering**, quite distinct from the broadly ovoid hood of the Indian Cobra.
 - Adult Caspian Cobras are uniform light to chocolate brown or yellowish and entirely lack any distinct hood markings (spectacle marks) or lateral throat spots.
 - It is characterized by smooth, dull, and strongly oblique dorsal scales, with the outer rows noticeably larger than the rest.
- **Venom Toxicity** - Toxicological studies rank *Naja oxiana* as potentially **the most venomous cobra species in the world**.
- Its crude venom is exceptionally rich in short neurotoxins and cytotoxins, capable of inducing rapid neuromuscular blockade and cell death.



- **Conservation Status**

- **IUCN Red List Status-** Near Threatened (NT).
- **CITES Status** -Listed under Appendix II.
- **Threats** - Its populations are increasingly vulnerable to intensive habitat fragmentation and economic development in river valleys and piedmont deserts across Central Asia.

Reference

[ETV Bharat | Rare Caspian Cobra](#)

