New species of tree snake

Prelims: *Current events of National and International Importance| Evironment*

Why in News?

Scientists have described Beddome's bronzeback (Dendrelaphis beddomei), a new species of non-venomous tree snake from India's Western Ghats, published in Taprobanica.

Named after Colonel Richard Henry Beddome, it was previously mistaken for the large-eyed bronzeback (*Dendrelaphis grandoculis*).

Distinguishing Features

- **Tongue colour–** Red to pink tongue.
- **Body markings–** White stripe or series of spots along the lower sides, often with prominent black blotches on the back.
- **Scalation–** Differs in head-scale characteristics and subcaudal scale counts (up to 168 pairs).
- **Identification sources–** Described using roadkill specimens (including one from Sullia in Karnataka's Dakshina Kannada district), live observations, and citizen-science photographs.

Habitat & Conservation

- **Habitat–** Favours lower elevations (recorded from 44 to 1,038 metres) on the western, windward slopes of the Western Ghats, including secondary forests, waterway-side forests, and plantations like rubber and areca nut.
- **Range–** Modelling points mainly to parts of the central Western Ghats (such as between Puttur and Jog Falls in Karnataka), with suitable habitats extending from Wayanad in Kerala to Uttara Kannada in Karnataka.
- **Threats & status–** Roadkill is a major threat; researchers have proposed a **Near Threatened** conservation status.



Reference

Down To Earth| New species of tree snake

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering