

## Occurrence of the Asian Water Monitor (*Varanus salvator* Laurenti, 1768) in Faridpur, Bangladesh

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**Abstract - Two sightings of *Varanus salvator* in Faridpur District, Bangladesh are reported. These two localities represent an extension of the known distribution of the species in Bangladesh.**

The Asian water monitor (*Varanus salvator*) is a vulnerable species according to IUCN Bangladesh (2015) and the largest monitor lizard found in Bangladesh (Khan, 2008; Hasan *et al.*, 2014). It is a water-dependent species and has been known to cross large stretches of water, explaining its wide distribution (Taylor, 1966), and occurs in terrestrial habitats adjoining water bodies (Koch *et al.*, 2013). Its natural habitat is declining due to various anthropogenic factors such as habitat fragmentation, human settlements, the discharge of domestic sewage and industrial effluent and dumping of solid waste, and the conversion of wetlands in to barren lands. However, *V. salvator* is flexible in its behavior, allowing it to adapt to some modified human ecosystems (Rahman *et al.*, 2017a). In Bangladesh, they are commonly seen in coastal areas and mangrove swamps of the Sundarbans and rarely in the northeast, southeastern forests, Manikganj and Narayanganj (Rahman *et al.*, 2017b). This species is also found in wildlife sanctuaries of the Sundarbans, Char Kukri-Mukri Wildlife Sanctuary, Nijhum Dweep National

Park and Teknaf Game Reserve (Khan, 2008). Published reports on this species in Bangladesh are scarce, and no records of *V. salvator* from Faridpur District have been reported.

On 26 August 2018 at 1107 h, we found an adult *V. salvator* foraging in a grassy area, 5 m from the bank of the Arial Khan River at Duair (23°24'59.9"N; 90°04'17.3" E) in Faridpur District (Fig. 1). It was readily identified as *V. salvator* based on the yellowish rings arranged in rows across the upper parts of the blackish body.

On 2 March 2019 at 1450 h, a juvenile *V. salvator* was observed basking on the bank of pond at Saresat Rashi (23°27'11.4" N; 90°01'15.8" E) in Faridpur District (Fig. 2). The nearest sighting records of the species are about 52 and 55 km, respectively, from the current location in Narayanganj District (23.632285° N, 90.524397° E) (Figs 3 & 4). This represents a range extension for *V. salvator* in Bangladesh.

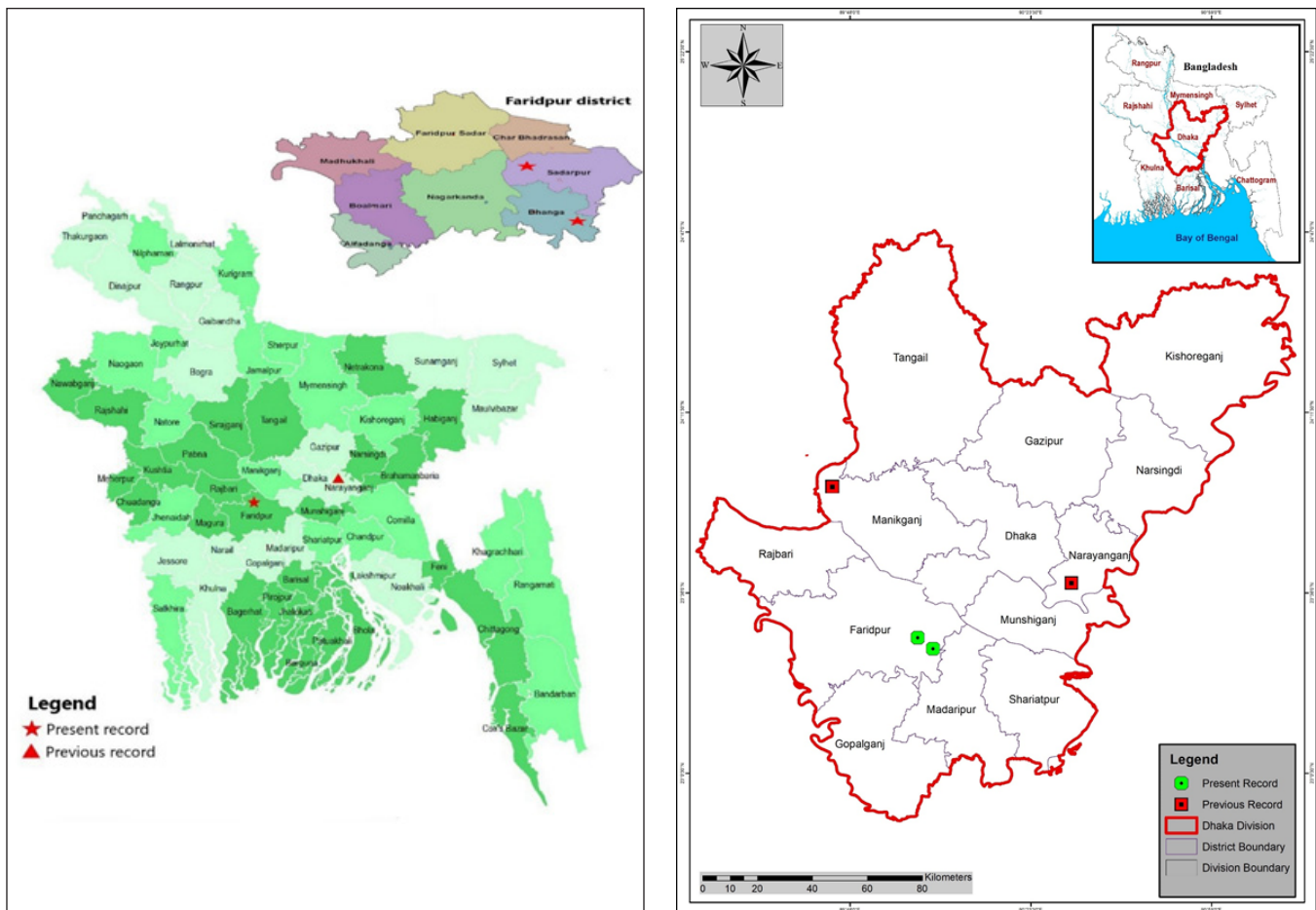
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Fig. 1. *Varanus salvator* in its natural habitat at Duair in Faridpur.



Fig. 2. *Varanus salvator* in its natural habitat at Saresat Rashi in Faridpur.



Figs 3 & 4. Maps depicting the locations in Faridpur District where *V. salvator* was spotted.

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