New tree snake in the Western Ghats: Beddome's bronzeback

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News

Scientists have described a new species of tree snake, Beddome's bronzeback (Dendrelaphis beddomei), from the Western Ghats. It had long been confused with the large-eyed bronzeback (Dendrelaphis grandoculis). The study, published in the journal Taprobanica (12 Nov 2026), separates the two by tongue colour (red or pink in the new species; dark in the large-eyed bronzeback), scale counts, body markings and habitat. Distribution modelling shows it is most likely to occur in the central Western Ghats, between Puttur and Jog Falls in Karnataka, on the lower western slopes.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Species	Dendrelaphis beddomei – Beddome's bronzeback
Confused with	Large-eyed bronzeback, D. grandoculis
Key feature	Red or pink tongue
Likely range (modelled)	Central Western Ghats (Puttur – Jog Falls, Karnataka)

Background

- Bronzebacks (genus Dendrelaphis) are slender, fast, day-active tree snakes of the family Colubridae; they are harmless (non-venomous) to people.

- The Western Ghats are a UNESCO World Heritage Site (2012) and, with Sri Lanka, one of the world's biodiversity hotspots. Taxonomy is the science of naming and classifying living things; the binomial system was given by Carl Linnaeus.

Tamil Nadu link: The species honours Col. Richard Henry Beddome (1830–1911), who headed the Madras Forest Department and described many reptiles and plants of the Nilgiris and southern hills. Tamil Nadu's Western Ghats include the Nilgiris, Anamalai and Agasthyamalai ranges.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

Scientists have described a new species of tree snake, Beddome's bronzeback (Dendrelaphis beddomei), from the Western Ghats. It had long been confused with the large-eyed bronzeback (Dendrelaphis grandoculis).

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Species: Dendrelaphis beddomei – Beddome's bronzeback; Confused with: Large-eyed bronzeback, D. grandoculis; Key feature: Red or pink tongue; Likely range (modelled): Central Western Ghats (Puttur – Jog Falls, Karnataka).

What is the background to this news?

Bronzebacks (genus Dendrelaphis) are slender, fast, day-active tree snakes of the family Colubridae; they are harmless (non-venomous) to people.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Which key feature separates the new Beddome's bronzeback from the large-eyed bronzeback?

A) A rattle on the tail

B) Two rows of venom fangs

C) A red or pink tongue

D) A cobra-like hood

Answer: C – Explanation: The large-eyed bronzeback has a dark tongue; scale counts, markings and habitat also differ.

2. Col. R.H. Beddome headed which body?

A) Bombay Natural History Society

B) Madras Forest Department

C) Botanical Survey of India

D) Zoological Survey of India

Answer: B – Explanation: Beddome (1830–1911), who headed the Madras Forest Department, described many reptiles and plants of the Nilgiris and southern hills.

3. Bronzeback tree snakes belong to which snake family?

A) Boidae

B) Colubridae

C) Elapidae

D) Viperidae

Answer: B – Explanation: Bronzebacks belong to Colubridae. Cobras and kraits are Elapidae; vipers are Viperidae; boas are Boidae.

4. 1. The Western Ghats are a World Heritage Site. 2. Bronzebacks are deadly venomous. 3. Western Ghats–Sri Lanka is a biodiversity hotspot. Which is/are correct?

A) 1 and 2 only

B) 2 and 3 only

C) 1 and 3 only

D) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: C – Explanation: Bronzebacks are harmless, so only 1 and 3 are correct; the Western Ghats became a World Heritage Site in 2012.

5. Jog Falls, named as one end of the new species' likely range, is on which river?

A) Sharavathi

B) Kali

C) Tungabhadra

D) Netravati

Answer: A – Explanation: Jog Falls is on the Sharavathi in Shivamogga district, Karnataka; Puttur is in Dakshina Kannada.