No room to roam: King Cobras reduce ² movement in agriculture

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13 Abstract

14 Studying animal movement provides insights into how animals react to land-use changes, specifically 15 how animals can change their behaviour in agricultural areas. Recent reviews show a tendency for 16 species to reduce movements in response to increased human landscape modification, but the study of movement has not been extensively explored in reptiles. We examined movements of a large reptilian 17 predator, the King Cobra (Ophiophagus hannah), in Northeast Thailand. We used a consistent regime 18 19 of radio-telemetry tracking to document movements across protected forest and adjacent agricultural areas. We then adapted GPS-targeting analytic methods to examine the movement using metrics of site 20 reuse and dynamic Brownian Bridge Movement Model derived motion variance. Examination of 21 22 motion variance demonstrated that King Cobra movements increased in forested areas and tended to 23 decrease in agricultural areas. Our Integrated Step-Selection Functions indicated that when moving in 24 agricultural areas King Cobras restricted their movements, thereby remaining within vegetated semi-25 natural areas, often located along the banks of irrigation canals. Site reuse metrics of residency time and 26 number of revisits remained unaffected by distance to landscape features. Neither motion variance nor reuse metrics were consistently affected by the presence of threatening landscape features (e.g. roads, 27 28 human settlements); suggesting that King Cobras will remain in close proximity to threats, provided 29 habitat patches are available. Although King Cobras displayed heterogeneity in their response to 30 agricultural landscapes, the overall trend suggested a reduction in movements when faced with 31 fragmented habitat patches embedded in an otherwise inhospitable land-use matrix. Reductions in 32 movements are consistent with findings for mammals and forest specialist species.

33 Keywords

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snake, reptile, Ophiophagus hannah, elapid, space-use, step-selection, dBBMM, site fidelity, tropical

35 Introduction

Examining animal movement can provide important information on conspecific interactions (Jellen et al. 2007), predator-prey dynamics (Courbin et al. 2016, Vogt et al. 2018), reproductive behaviours (Kamath and Losos 2018), and responses to anthropogenic threats (Valeix et al. 2012, Loveridge et al. 2017). Additionally, and perhaps most important to conservation planning, is the connection between movement and resource acquisition (Prange et al. 2004, Mueller et al. 2011, Doherty et al. 2019). Understanding habitat requirements, via animal movement, can help prioritise areas to protect from land-use conversion, inform management, and build conservation plans (Fraser et al. 2018).

Anthropogenic land-use can alter the ecology of a landscape, changing resources (Arrondo et al. 2018),
modifying behaviour (Gaynor et al. 2018), and introducing novel threats (Robertson et al. 2013). Such
changes can result in increased mortality of species, or even subtler sub-lethal costs (Cottontail et al.
2009, Clark et al. 2011, Karraker et al. 2018). A global review of non-volant mammals revealed that
movements are directly impacted by human landscapes: animals present in human landscapes reduce
movement (Tucker et al. 2018).

49 Despite indications of overall reductions in vagility, the impacts of anthropogenic landscapes on 50 threatened species is likely to vary. Evolutionary history and key traits are likely to modify a species' 51 movements in relation to human-dominated landscapes (Fahrig 2007). For example, species that 52 evolved in continuous habitat (i.e. forest specialists) historically experienced lower costs to large 53 movements and crossing habitat barriers, potentially resulting in species leaving prime habitat and using 54 riskier anthropogenic landscapes (Fahrig 2007).

Vulnerability in anthropogenic landscapes can be augmented by species traits such as large body size, parental investment in offspring, habitat specialisation, and low population densities, which have been connected to increased extinction risk (Purvis et al. 2000, Cardillo 2005, Böhm et al. 2016, Slavenko et al. 2016, Todd et al. 2017). Species frequently involved in human-wildlife conflict are also more vulnerable to direct mortality in anthropogenic landscapes (Shankar et al. 2013, Marshall et al. 2018).

60 We aimed to explore the movement patterns of a large-bodied, highly persecuted predator in a mixed-61 use landscape. Reptiles' role in ecosystems are underappreciated (Miranda 2017) and, in South East 62 Asian agricultural systems, likely constitute an important aspect of the remaining wildlife. Few reptile 63 species fulfil similar ecological functions comparable to large mammals, but King Cobras 64 (Ophiophagus hannah [CANTOR, 1836]) share several traits that could indicate their importance in ecosystem functioning and vulnerability to habitat modification. Using radio-telemetry, we 1) assess 65 66 non-random habitat selection and 2) identify changes in movement patterns within anthropogenic areas 67 to reveal how King Cobras are potentially adapting to land-use change.

68 Methods and Materials

69 Field Methods

We studied King Cobras at the Sakaerat Biosphere Reserve located in Nakhon Ratchasima province, Northeast Thailand (14.44–14.55°N, 101.88–101.95°E). The reserve is comprised of three zones varying in levels of human-modification: the core zone, protected and fully forested; the buffer zone, protected and undergoing reforestation; and the transitional zone, an agricultural matrix dominated by rice, corn and sugar. The transitional zone also contains 159 villages and a four-lane highway that connects Nakhon Ratchasima to Bangkok. Further descriptions of the study site can be found in Silva et al. (2018) and Marshall et al. (2018, 2019).

The capture and implantation methods, alongside King Cobra measurements, have been previously
described in Marshall et al. (2018, 2019). We tracked individuals four times a day, with approximately
four hours between tracks from 2014-03-22 to 2018-07-28 (06:30, 11:00, 16:00, 20:00; the distribution
of time lags between tracking is available in Supplementary Figure 1). Full details of the tracking
protocols can be found in Silva et al. (2018). We named every individual according to their age class,
sex and capture number (e.g. AM006 = an adult male who was the sixth King Cobra captured).

83 Environmental data

We obtained daily rainfall and temperatures from five weather stations within the Sakaerat Biosphere
Reserve core zone to identify seasons (Sakaerat Environmental Research Station 2018). We averaged
daily readings by station, and ran cluster analysis to generate seasons using the *segclust2D* package
(v.0.2.0 Patin et al. 2018).

For the entire study site, we obtained high quality land-use shapefiles from a land survey by the Thai Land Development Department (Land Development Department, Thailand 2017). We converted categorical land-use classifications to continuous raster layers, describing Euclidean distances to key landscape features (i.e., forest, roads, semi-natural areas, settlements, and water bodies). We set the cell size of the newly created rasters to approximately 10m, which was sufficiently small to detect fine-scale changes. Semi-natural areas were areas of scrub and vegetation not actively being farmed, often along field margins, irrigation canals and in disused plots.

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Motion variance and area estimation

96 Traditionally, research on reptile spatial ecology has relied on kernel density and minimum convex 97 polygon approaches to estimate space-use, as a proxy for movements and activity. Kernel density 98 estimators are problematic, because the technique assumes independence between locations, which can 99 never be strictly met in radio tracking datasets (Fieberg 2007). Efforts to combat autocorrelation

(Worton 1989), lead to a loss of information decreasing the biological relevance of space-use estimates
(De Solla et al. 1999). Dynamic Brownian Bridge Movement Models (dBBMM; Kranstauber et al.
2012) present an alternative that accounts for non-independence of locations and provides a balance

between over- and under-estimating space-use (Silva et al. 2018, 2020b).

104 We used the move package (v.3.1.0 Kranstauber et al. 2016) to run dBBMMs estimating motion variance and the area used by King Cobras. We used the *adehabitatHR* package to extract utilisation 105 106 distributions and contours (v.0.4.16 Calenge 2006), and the rgeos (v.0.4.2 Bivand and Rundel 2018) 107 package to estimate the area of contours. We used dBBMMs instead of standard BBMMs, because the former allowed for estimates of changes in motion variance over time (Horne et al. 2007, Kranstauber 108 et al. 2012). Following Kranstauber et al. (2012), we selected a window and margin size for dBBMMs 109 110 based on a timeframe that was biologically relevant to suspected changes in behavioural states. Due to our reliance on Very High Frequency (VHF) radio tracking and associated coarse temporal resolution 111 data, we targeted the identification of activity and sheltering. We were able to detect shifts from activity 112 113 to sheltering with slightly greater than one day of radio tracking effort; therefore, we set margin size at 114 5 data points. A relevant time for a behavioural state to last was approximately one week (i.e. long-term 115 sheltering); therefore, we set window size to 25 data points. We used GPS error for dBBMM location 116 error on a point-by-point basis, for points that did not have GPS error recorded we used the mean GPS error for that individual. 117

118 We explored seasonal changes in motion variance and how it was impacted by an individual's proximity 119 to landscape features (i.e., forest, roads, semi-natural areas, settlements, and water bodies). Due to serial autocorrelation and over dispersal in motion variance and distance raster values, we used non-metric 120 multidimensional scaling (NMDS) to explore interactions among these variables. Using the vegan 121 122 package (v.2.5.5 Oksanen et al. 2019), we ran NMDS on a distance matrix created from the rasters that described distances from key landscape features (using 2000 iterations to produce two axes). We plotted 123 the resulting two-dimensions and coloured points corresponding to the motion variance values. The 124 125 resulting visualisation allowed us to identify areas of high or low motion variance and the manner in which they are associated with snakes' distances to landscape features. 126

127 Site fidelity and reuse

Shelter sites are important for species requiring extended periods of low mobility to digest meals (Siers et al. 2018) or undergo ecdysis (Dodd and Barichivich 2007). Reptile studies often infer important areas using the 50% use ("core area") contour from a kernel density home range estimation. Use of a more intensive radio tracking regime allowed us to identify individual shelter sites, time spent within shelters,

and frequency of reuse.

133 We identified site reuse with the *recurse* package (v.1.1.0 Bracis et al. 2018). We defined each site as 134 a circular area with a radius equal to the mean GPS error recorded for each individual ($\bar{x} = 5.1 \pm 0.8 \text{ m}$, range = 3.5 - 10.0 m). When examining the frequency of revisits, we filtered out sites where the snake 135 was present for less than the mean time between data points (9 hours). We determined whether a site 136 137 was within the protected core area or the human-modified agricultural areas, then compared how 138 frequency of site reuse and time spent at a shelter differed between these areas. We used Man-Whitney 139 tests (we determined the data was non-normal with qq-plots) to compare differences at a population 140 level.

141 Time spent at sites (residency time) and the reuse rate (recurse) have direct connections to the extent of 142 animal space use, making them useful metrics to detect restrictions in movement (Van Moorter et al. 2016). To examine these two metrics we ran four Bayesian models in JAGS using the *jagsUI* package 143 144 (v.1.5.0 Kellner 2018). Two models used a log normal distribution to explore the impacts of proximity 145 to uncorrelated landscape features on log transformed residency time (Bracis et al. 2018). Two models 146 used a Poisson distribution to explore the impacts of proximity to uncorrelated landscape features on 147 revisit counts (Bracis et al. 2018). We determined spatial correlation in the landscape rasters and created 148 two groups of uncorrelated variables (r<0.6) to use as predicators: 1) roads, forest, and settlements; 2) 149 roads, forest, and semi-natural areas.

Because of the variation between individuals, we used the individual ID as a random effect impacting both models' intercepts and gradients. We excluded AM007 from models because he remained in the forest; therefore, had little opportunity to display preference beyond forests or interact with landscape features.

We used Cauchy and half Cauchy distributions (Lemoine 2019) as hyperparameters for the centre and 154 155 precision of normal distributions priors for individual random effects on distance to forest, semi-natural 156 areas, roads, settlements and water. We selected weakly informative priors based on the assumption 157 that King Cobras would follow similar movement patterns as those described in Tucker et al. (2018): 158 reduced movement associated with anthropogenic features. We made the prior for the effect of distance to forest negative, reflecting the likely opposite effect from anthropogenic features proximity. We ran 159 all models using three chains over 20,000 interactions, with the first 5,000 discarded as burn-in and a 160 161 thinned factor of 50. Full JAGS models specifications can be found in at DOI: 162 10.5281/zenodo.3666029.

163 We identified convergence via \hat{R} values and traceplots. We evaluated model performance using DIC, 164 Bayes P-values, followed by visual inspection of posterior predictive check plots.

165 The *recurse* package also allowed us to quantify time spent in the protected core zone of the reserve.166 Comparing movements to a shapefile of the reserve's protected zone allowed us to create a summary

of all boundary crossings (entrance and exit times). From the revisit data, we calculated overall timespent in the core zone and plotted the use of the zone over time.

169 Integrated Step-selection Function

We explored King Cobra movements through the landscape with Integrated Step-Selection Functions 170 (ISSF) from the *amt* package (v.0.0.6 Signer et al. 2018), using the same distance from landscape 171 features rasters used in the above analyses. For ISSF, we inverted raster layers to guard against zero-172 inflation in distance values and make interpretation of resulting effects more intuitive. We used the 173 landscape values at the endpoints in ISSF, because our sampling regime was temporally insufficient to 174 assume straight-line movements between locations. We produced 200 random locations per step, with 175 no resampling of data, because temporal resolution of our radio-tracking data was coarser than GPS 176 data allowing high numbers of random steps without requiring prohibitively intense computation. 177 178 Producing 200 random locations reduced the chance of missing rare landscape types, and made the best 179 use of high-resolution raster data (Thurfjell et al. 2014).

180 All nine models included step length and angle (Forester et al. 2009), with random step lengths and 181 angles drawn from gamma and von Mises distributions, respectively. One model only included step 182 length and angle as predictors, five models included step length, angle and distance from a landscape feature, and three models included step length, angle and a combination of distances from multiple 183 uncorrelated landscape features. We selected models per individual using Aikike's Information 184 Criterion (AIC), discarding those with a \triangle AIC > 2 (Burnham and Anderson 2010). We did not model 185 186 average to produce a population level model, because we observed high individual heterogeneity. We 187 excluded AM007 from the ISSF analysis, because he never left forested areas.

188 Software and data

We completed all analysis in R (v.3.5.3 R Core Team 2019) and R Studio (v.1.2.1335 R Studio Team 2019). The full dataset, with code scripts, can be found at DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.3666029. Movement data is also available on MoveBank (Movebank ID: 1093796277).

192 For data manipulation, we used R packages *broom* (v.0.5.2 Robinson and Hayes 2019), *data.table*

- 193 (v.1.12.2 Dowle and Srinivasan 2019), *dplyr* (v.0.8.3 Wickham et al. 2019), *forcats* (v.0.4.0 Wickham
- 194 2019a), *lubridate* (v.1.7.4 Grolemund and Wickham 2011), *openxlsx* (v.4.1.0 Walker 2018), *readr*
- 195 (v.1.3.1 Wickham et al. 2018), reshape2 (v.1.4.3 Wickham 2007), and stringr (v.1.4.0 Wickham
- 196 2019b). We handled rasters and shapefiles with R packages raster (v.2.8.19 Hijmans 2019), rgdal
- 197 (v.1.4.3 Bivand et al. 2019) and *sp* (v.1.3.1 Pebesma and Bivand 2005, Bivand et al. 2013). For
- visualisations we used R packages *cowplot* (v.0.9.4 Wilke 2019), *ggplot2* (v.3.2.1 Wickham 2009),
- 199 ggpubr (v.0.2 Kassambara 2018), ggspatial (v.1.0.3 Dunnington 2018), scales (v.1.1.0 Wickham and

Seidel 2019) and *scico* (v.1.1.0 Pedersen and Crameri 2018). To determine model convergence and
evaluate model performance, we used the R packages *ggmcmc* (v.1.2 Fernández-i-Marín 2016), *ggridges* (v.0.5.1 Wilke 2018), and *tidybayes* (v.1.0.4 Kay 2019).

203 **Results**

We tracked seven King Cobras for an average of 649.7 ± 112.3 days (Table 1; all \pm indicated the standard 204 205 error [SE] associated with the \bar{x} , calculated using the *pracma* package (v.2.2.5 Borchers 2019)) enabling 206 us to use dynamic Brownian Bridge Movement Model analysis and explore impacts of land-use on movement. We tracked and located each King Cobra an average of 1834 ± 297.1 times, with an average 207 of 8.5 ± 0.1 hours between fixes (range = 0.1 - 793.9 hours; Supplementary Figure 1). King Cobras 208 209 occupied an average of 524 ± 104.5 unique locations, covering large areas in protected and unprotected 210 areas (Table 1; Figure 1), with adult males tending to move more. The two juvenile males differed 211 greatly from each other, likely the result of JM013's northward travel. We only radio tracked a single 212 adult female, which used the smallest area of any snake.

Table 1. Summary of tracking and movements. Datapoints = number of datapoints collected on an individual irrespective of move or not. Relocations = number of unique locations visited by an individual. Days = number of days tracked. Revisits frequency = the number of days between revisits to a previously used location (days tracked / count of reused locations). Time stationary = mean sheltering time \pm SE in days. dBBMM Range = range areas estimated using dBBMM 99%, 95%, and 90% contours. σ^2 m = mean motion variance \pm SE. % Outside of PA = Percentage of total time tracked an individual was outside of the protected area.

						dBBMM Range (ha)				
				Revisit	Time					% outside
ID	Datapoints	Days	Relocations	frequency	stationary	90	95	99	σ²m	PA
AF017	2245	774.97	728	3.19	1.84 ±0.13	41.69	68.15	149.28	7.53 ±0.33	91.53
AM006	2173	723.05	542	19.03	2.58 ± 0.27	519.60	701.44	1063.42	42.61 ± 1.74	15.49
AM007	969	320.66	220	12.83	2.61 ± 0.53	232.70	345.62	616.90	51.90 ± 3.81	0.67
AM015	1944	680.13	587	13.60	2.24 ±0.22	379.80	603.32	1081.54	27.3 ± 1.22	67.57
AM018	3122	1176.10	985	7.79	2.16 ± 0.14	255.09	492.54	977.84	33.56 ± 1.41	42.39
JM013	1497	561.19	381	21.58	3.09 ± 0.39	354.33	533.26	972.74	22.35 ± 1.11	99.95
JM019	890	311.79	228	11.99	2.56 ±0.37	61.01	119.04	390.39	7.90 ±0.63	_

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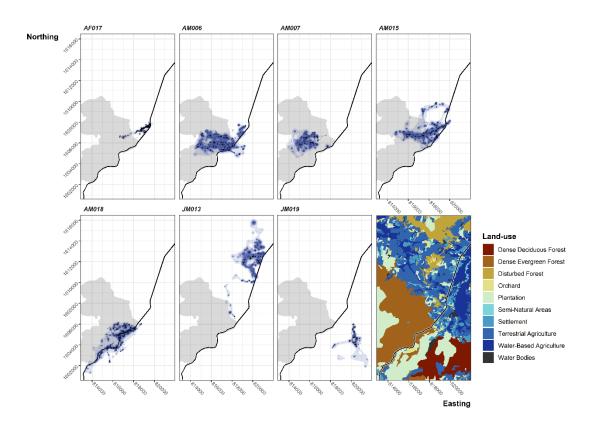


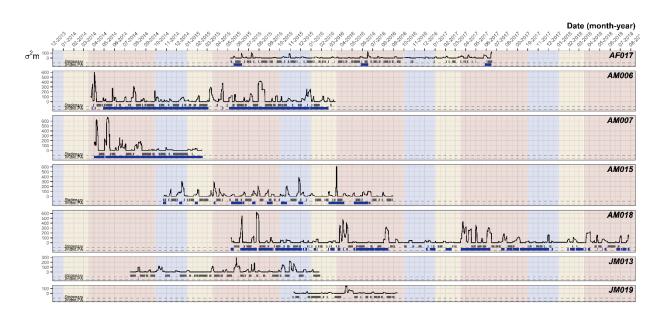


Figure 1. Dynamic Brownian Bridge Movement Model estimates of utilisation distribution contours. Areas displayed
 with increasing levels of opacity are the 99%, 95% and 90% utilisation contours. Black dots show locations. The shaded
 background area shows the protected core area. Dark central line is the four-lane 304 highway. Bottom right map shows the
 land-use types in the area.

Our examination of seasonality using *segclust2D* suggested that five clusters and 23 segments was the best way of dividing the 2012-2018 period into seasons. However, it resulted in seasons unique to single years. Therefore, we manually simplified the seasons into three groups that appear in nearly all years: hot ($\bar{x} = 33.8 \pm 2.8$ °C, $\bar{x} = 2.5 \pm 7.9$ mm rainfall), wet ($\bar{x} = 29.9 \pm 2.2$ °C, $\bar{x} = 5.9 \pm 11.1$ mm rainfall) and

229 dry ($\bar{x} = 29.0 \pm 3.5$ °C, $\bar{x} = 0.2 \pm 0.8$ mm rainfall).

Time spent in human disturbed areas varied dramatically between individuals and showed modest seasonal patterns ($\bar{x} = 59.7 \pm 15.5\%$, range = 0.7 – 100%; Table 1, Figure 2). During the start of the hot season (Figure 2 red highlight, February-April), adult males ventured out of protected forested areas, a pattern particularly clear in AM006's movements. During other times of the year, snakes exhibited more consistent use of the protected area, which coincided with more frequent long-term use of shelter sites (Figure 2). The female, AM017, showed a consistent yearly pattern of entering the protected area via a semi-natural area corridor that connected to a streambed.



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Figure 2. Motion variance of each individual over their tracking period. Black lines show the motion variance values over time. Grey bars indicate long-term sheltering behaviour (i.e., when the time sheltering was greater than the individual's mean sheltering time). Blue bars indicate times when the individual was within the protected forested area. Shading shows the three seasons: red = Hot, blue = Wet, yellow = Dry.

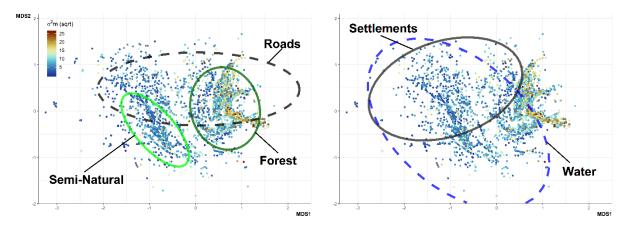
242 Motion variance

Mean motion variance differed among individuals ($\bar{x} = 27.9 \pm 0.6$ m, range = 5.6e⁻⁰⁵ - 675.8 m, Table 243 1). The largest motion variances belonged to adult males, characterized by larger movements 244 245 concentrated at the beginning of the hot season (Figure 2, red highlight). Juvenile males did not move as far as adult males at any time of the year, but they did appear to be more active than the female, 246 AF017. Motion variance of AF017 peaked during the hot season, when she entered the protected area 247 in mid- to late-April and left in mid-May. All individuals displayed seasonal differences in motion 248 249 variance, with the lowest values during the dry season ($\bar{x} = 34.9 \pm 1.0 \sigma^2 m$) compared to hot ($\bar{x} = 22.1$ 250 $\pm 0.8 \sigma^2$ m) and wet seasons ($\bar{x} = 14.0 \pm 0.7 \sigma^2$ m; Figure 2).

Motion variance was highest in evergreen and disturbed forests ($\bar{x} = 38.9 \pm 1.1$, max = 665 m; $\bar{x} = 48.3$

- ± 4.8 , max = 598 m), and lowest in orchards ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, max = 449), semi-natural areas ($\bar{x} = 10.5 \pm 1.24$ m, ma
- 253 11.6 \pm 0.6, max = 347 m), and water bodies ($\bar{x} = 10.3 \pm 1.4$, max = 119 m).
- Using NMDS, we successfully reduced dimensionality of chosen landscape features, revealing several patterns. The clearest pattern was the grouping of higher motion variance values, the majority of which arose when snakes were < 100 m from forested areas (Figure 3; see Supplementary Figure 2 for biplot). In contrast to movement variance values near or within forests, NMDS revealed consistently lower values within 100 m of semi-natural areas. All other covariates were more weakly associated with particular motion variance values. Roads contained a wide array of values, which overlapped with forest and semi-natural areas, suggesting a weaker impact on motion variance. Settlements and water bodies

- revealed similarly weak associations to motion variance, but there was a tendency for motion variance
- 262 near or within settlements to be lower than those near or within forests.



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Figure 3. Non-metric multidimensional scaling plot. Motion variance values are reflected by the colour of the points, we
 have rooted these values so value differences are easier to distinguish. Ellipses indicate 95% of points within 100 m of a given
 landscape feature. A) Ellipses highlight points existing within 100 m of forest, semi-natural areas, and roads. B) Ellipses
 highlights points existing within 100 m of water, and settlements.

268 Site fidelity and reuse

The *recurse* analysis revealed that mean time spent at a shelter site (stationary for more than 9 hours) was 2.3 ± 0.1 days (range = 0.4 - 43.5 days; Supplementary Figure 3), and all snakes demonstrated site fidelity, revisiting a previously used site on average every 13.0 ± 2.4 days (range = 3.2 - 21.6 days; Table 1).

Mann-Whitney U tests at a population level failed to detect significant differences in frequency of site reuse between sites in core forest (median = 190.4) and anthropogenic areas (median = 99.1; W = 13027, $n_1 = 99$, $n_2 = 250$, p-value = 0.4432 two-sided; Supplementary Figure 4). Similarly, time spent within sites was not significantly different between core forest (median = 24.7) and anthropogenic areas (median = 24.8; W = 210410, $n_1 = 398$, $n_2 = 1095$, p-value = 0.3087 two-sided; Supplementary Figure 5).

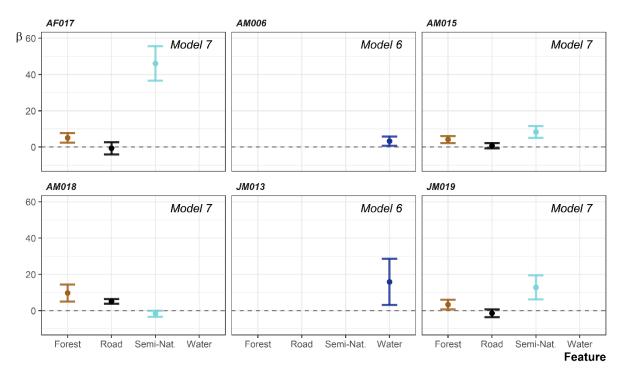
- All models we ran to predict residency time and revisits converged and produced Bayes p-values close to 0.5. All the models revealed that the distance to landscape features has a negligible effect on residency time or revisit frequency, illustrated by all ß coefficient 95% credible intervals values overlapping with zero. Results of all Bayesian models can be found in Supplementary Table 1.
- 283 Integrated Step-selection Function
- Individual movements of the King Cobras were best described by three models (Figure 4; Table 2; full
- 285 ISSF results can be found in Supplementary Table 2). Model 7 performed best for four individuals, and

286 included proximity to forest, roads, and semi-natural areas. Universally, the locations of AF017, 287 AM015, AM018 and JM019 were positively associated with forests. However, the association between 288 movements, roads, and semi-natural areas varied; AF017, AM015 and JM019 prefered semi-natural 289 areas, but were inconsistently associated with roads. The movements of AM006, AM015, and AF017 while in agricultural land exemplifies King Cobras' reliance on semi-natural areas (Figure 5). By 290 contrast, AM018's locations were associated with roads, while weakly avoiding semi-natural areas. But 291 for AM018 model 8 was within 2 Δ AIC. Model 8 replaced semi-natural areas with settlements as a 292 predictor, indicating positive association ($\beta = 2.504, 95\%$ CI -0.244 – 5.253). Models targeting JM013's 293 movements were similarly inconclusive, with four models achieving Δ AIC < 2 (including the null 294 model), indicating distance to landscape feature was a poor predictor of movement. Finally, AM006's 295 296 movements were best described by model 6, indicating a weak association with water bodies.

Table 2. ISSF model formulation and AIC results. $sl = step length; ta = turning angle; dist_* = distance from forest,$ $settlement, semi-natural area, road, and water. * and bold indicate the models <math>< 2 \Delta AIC$ from the top-performing model.

Model	Model formula, all begin with Model1 formulation	AF017	AM006	AM015	AM018	JM013	JM019
Model1	log_sl*cos_ta+strata(step_id_)	7573.47	5794.50	6205.87	10567.77	4014.21*	2402.41
Model2	Model1+dist_forest+dist_forest:log_sl+dist_forest:cos_ta	7555.47	5794.62	6187.03	10530.19	4013.58*	2399.25
Model3	$Model1 + dist_settle + dist_settle : log_sl + dist_settle : cos_ta$	7542.05	5794.64	6201.81	10552.30	4014.60*	2402.45
Model4	$Model1 + dist_semiNat + dist_semiNat:log_sl + dist_semiNat:cos_ta$	7492.52	5783.74	6186.73	10563.71	4017.76	2392.32
Model5	Model1+dist_road+dist_road:log_sl+dist_road:cos_ta	7557.50	5791.24	6201.98	10498.78	4017.31	2406.31
Model6	$Model1 + dist_water + dist_water: log_sl + dist_water: cos_ta$	7566.34	5779.88*	6199.01	10559.55	4013.23*	2404.11
Model7	Model1+dist_road+dist_forest+dist_semiNat	7471.48*	5789.37	6171.16*	10471.26*	4017.55	2388.28*
Model8	$Model1 + dist_road + dist_forest + dist_settle$	7539.43	5789.9	6195.03	10472.37*	4017.61	2400.04
Model9	Model1+dist_road+dist_forest+dist_water	7530.33	5789.75	6187.41	10474.02	4015.71	2398.12

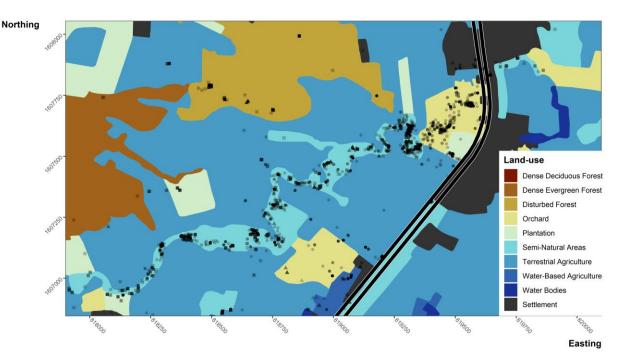
299



300

301 Figure 4. The coefficients from the best performing integrated step-selection functions per individual. Error bars show

302 the 95% confidence interval. JM013 and AM018's had other models within 2 Δ AIC.



303

Figure 5. A map of land-use illustrating how King Cobra movements are largely occurring within semi-natural areas.
 Displayed using semi-transparent points, are the locations of King Cobras across the entire study period. Circles = AF017,
 triangles = AM006, squares = AM015.

307 **Discussion**

308 We present some of the first evidence for how a large tropical reptile modifies its movements when in 309 agricultural areas. Motion variance was characterized by seasonal peaks associated with breeding

310 activity, but generally showed decreased activity in agricultural areas. Reduced movement in 311 anthropogenic systems reflects meta-analyses of mammalian movements in anthropogenic systems 312 (Tucker et al. 2018). Research on reptile spatial ecology has documented either reduced space-use (Mitrovich et al. 2009, Hoss et al. 2010, Breininger et al. 2011, Lomas et al. 2019) or reduced movement 313 314 (Parent and Weatherhead 2000, Corey and Doody 2010, Beale et al. 2016, Doherty et al. 2019) in fragmented agricultural landscapes. But the response to fragmentation is not universal, other research 315 failed to detect significant shifts in movement patterns (Row et al. 2012, Wolf et al. 2013, Anguiano 316 317 and Diffendorfer 2015), or even revealed increased space-use in fragmented areas (Kapfer et al. 2010, 318 Ettling et al. 2013), potentially due to species-specific evolutionary history traits (Fahrig 2007). King 319 Cobras appeared to be reacting in a way consistent with forest specialists, or taxa that have evolved in 320 continuous habitat (Fahrig 2007) -limited boundary avoidance, large movements, and mortality in human-dominated areas (Marshall et al. 2018). Landscape-specialist species occupying fragmented 321 322 areas likely face limited resources, resulting in restricted movements to more naturalistic corridors 323 (Dondina et al. 2019).

324 The clearest pattern we documented was preferential use of semi-natural vegetation patches when King 325 Cobras moved within agricultural areas. These patches primarily consist of dense vegetation arrayed 326 linearly along the banks of irrigation canals, and are used more frequently than the surrounding matrix 327 of agricultural fields, acting as movement corridors through the fragmented landscape. Linear habitats potentially impact movements in other reptile species (Kay et al. 2016, Doherty et al. 2019). Doherty 328 329 et al. (2019) suggested that reduced movement by Eastern Bearded Dragons (Pogona barbata) was 330 partly driven by higher prey availability in linear vegetation patches. Although we lack direct evidence 331 suggesting semi-natural areas within agricultural landscapes host relatively higher prey abundance, it is 332 likely King Cobra prey can be found more frequently where vegetation and water are present (Murphy 333 et al. 1999, Barnes et al. 2017, Strine et al. 2018). However, increased movements in forests, at least 334 for some individuals, may indicate that resource availability alone fails to explain variation in 335 movement patterns. Intact forests are extremely valuable and present a resource-rich environment, 336 theoretically reducing the need for foraging movements (Wasko and Sasa 2012, Doherty and Driscoll 337 2018).

Ectotherms also have to consider the thermal qualities of habitats, shifting habitat usage to maximise efficiency (Blouin-Demers and Weatherhead 2001, 2002). Compared to temperate regions, evidence from the tropics that behavioural shifts are required to maximise thermoregulation is more ambiguous (Luiselli and Akani 2002), but not unknown in larger species (Shine and Madsen 1996). Open fields and vegetation corridors present two contrasting thermal environments. When temperatures are high tropical snakes may need to seek cooler, covered, and environments potentially richer in shelter sites. 344 Utilisation of covered areas may also be tied to threat avoidance, as threats are known to influence 345 animal movement (Rio-Maior et al. 2019, Suraci et al. 2019). In our study area, roads pose a major 346 threat to many animals (Silva et al. 2020a). King Cobras also fall victim to both direct (Marshall et al. 2018) and indirect (Strine et al. 2014) human-caused mortality. However, we failed to detect clear 347 348 avoidance of roads or human settlements; King Cobras made use of suitable habitat types regardless of their proximity to threatening landscape features. Similarly, patterns of site reuse remained consistent 349 in respect to proximity to landscape features. This suggests that the overarching driver of site residency 350 351 time and revisitation is largely independent of habitat, instead likely connected to cycles of ecdysis and 352 prey capture and digestion (Dodd and Barichivich 2007, Siers et al. 2018).

Building on our results, we suggest that future conservation research focus on landscape connectivity. 353 354 Irrigation canals and forest fragments may allow King Cobras to persist across areas largely separated from protected forest. Research on landscape connectivity could be especially beneficial if paired with 355 356 an assessment of how threats can be effectively mitigated. The apparent lack of threat avoidance 357 illustrated by the studied King Cobras demands changes in human behaviour. For example, road 358 crossing structures in combination with fencing would likely help to mitigate the threat posed by roads 359 (Rytwinski et al. 2016). Whereas reducing persecution of King Cobras will require a change in current 360 negative perceptions (Shankar et al. 2013, Marshall et al. 2018) and improvements in humane snake removal services, although the cost-effectiveness of snake removal services needs further quantification 361 (Devan-Song et al. 2016). 362

363 Conclusion

364 Our results indicate that limited areas in agricultural landscapes are suitable for King Cobras, resulting in reduced movements that largely occur within vegetated patches along irrigation canals. Apparent 365 366 reliance on vegetated patches, in an otherwise hostile human-dominated matrix, mirror findings that 367 landscape heterogeneity and the presence of semi-natural vegetated features are required to maintain 368 reptile diversity (Nopper et al. 2017, Pulsford et al. 2017, Boesing et al. 2018). The vulnerability of King Cobras in agricultural areas suggests that these areas may be acting as a population sink (Driscoll 369 370 et al. 2013, Marshall et al. 2018), which emphasises the importance of maintaining vegetated areas 371 within the landscape matrix to provide refuge from known mortality sources. Future research will assess 372 spatial composition of resources available to King Cobras, and whether reduced movement leads to 373 additional sub-lethal costs. More broadly, our findings suggest that wide-ranging reptiles can react to 374 landscape fragmentation in similar ways to terrestrial mammals. This is especially important, because 375 large snakes, such as King Cobras, fulfil underappreciated ecosystem roles (Miranda 2017). Their role in top-down trophic structuring is likely comparable to mammals that typically receive more 376 377 conservation attention.

378

379 **Declarations**

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403

Availability of data and materials

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406 and generate figures.

407 Author contributions

408 Conceptualization, I.S., M.C., and C.T.S.; Methodology, I.S., M.C., C.T.S., and B.M.M.; Formal
409 Analysis, B.M.M., M.C., and I.S.; Investigation, C.T.S., I.S., M.C., M.D.J., C.W.H. and B.M.M.;
410 Resources, M.G., P.S., T.A., and S.W.; Writing – Original Draft, B.M.M., M.C., I.S., M.D.J., and
411 C.T.S.; Writing – Review & Editing, B.M.M., M.C., I.S., M.D.J., C.W.H., C.T.S., and M.G.;

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414 Competing interest

415 We declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

416 Ethics approval and consent to participate

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