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A Second Record of Scavenging Behavior in Common Indian Krait (*Bungarus caeruleus* [Schneider 1801]) from India

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Twelve to 14 currently recognized species of Kraits (Elapidae: *Bungarus*) inhabit all southern Asian countries except the Philippines (Ariaratnam at al. 2008), including the entire Indo-Chinese sub-region and adjacent area of southeastern Asia (Slowinski 1994; Kharin et al. 2011). The Common Indian Krait (*B. caeruleus*) is abundant in India and has been recorded in Nagpur District (Deshmukh et al. 2015). Kraits are nocturnal and known to feed on other snakes (even other kraits), but also rodents, lizards, and frogs (Whitaker and Captain 2008).

Fig. 1. A road-killed Common Indian Krait (*Bungarus caeruleus*) being consumed by a conspecific scavenger. After thoroughly inspecting the dead snake, the scavenging krait began swallowing it headfirst (top) and continued past midbody (bottom). Complete ingestion took about 11 min. Photographs by the senior author.

Scavenging behavior in snakes appears to be more common than previously thought, just often overlooked or simply not observed (Ayres 2012). Recently, Ayres (2012) reported scavenging behavior in the genus *Natrix* and found *N. maura* and *N. natrix* feeding on the carcass of a newt. Other recent studies recorded scavenging in Cottonmouths (*Agkistrodon piscivourus conanti*) at island bird rookeries (Lillywhite et al. 2002, 2008), where snakes fed on fish dropped by birds and dead fish in an intertidal zone. Shivik and Clark (2012) described Brown Treesnakes (*Boiga irregularis*) using visual, chemical, and thermal cues to locate food and noted that snakes using chemical cues appear to scavenge more frequently than those relying on visual or thermal cues.

At 1935 h during a road survey on 23 July 2016 (21°22'34.176"N, Longitude 78°48'02.845"E), we found a road-killed *Bungarus caeruleus* (total length ~270 mm). Approximately 5 h later, as we were returning from the road survey, we encountered a young *B. caeruleus* (~340 mm) approaching the dead snake while flicking its tongue. After inspecting the snake from head to tail from both sides, it swallowed the dead snake headfirst (Fig. 1). Ingestion lasted about 11 min. The snake then moved into the weeds along the road.

Scavenging behavior in *Bungarus caeruleus* was first documented at Jhadeswar Hill, Ganjam District, Odisha, India, on 12 May 2010 (Monapatra 2011). We suggest that scavenging is a prevalent opportunistic foraging strategy in *B. caeruleus* and that these snakes rely heavily on olfactory cues to find food.

Acknowledgements

We thank Dr. B.V. Jadhav (Satara), Rahul Khot (Curator, BNHS Mumbai), Mr. Hegade (BNHS), Swapnil Bhondawe, Sarang Hadke, Sushil Pillewan, Ajit Deshmukh, Ankush Kukde, Lalit Nehare, Tushar Thakur, and Shubham Katgube.

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