IRCF REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS
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Arboreal Behavior of a Variegated Kukri Snake, *Oligodon taeniolatus* (Jerdon 1853), in Delhi, India

Gaurav Barhadiya[1], Aisha Sultana[2], and Mohammad Shah Hussain[2]

[1]Department of Environmental Studies, University of Delhi, New Delhi, Delhi–110007, India (Gaurav7wild7@gmail.com)
[2]Biodiversity Parks Programme, Centre for Environmental Management of Degraded Ecosystems (CEMDE), University of Delhi, New Delhi, Delhi–110007, India

The Variegated Kukri Snake (*Oligodon taeniolatus*), a slender, mostly terrestrial, non-venomous, shy, and inoffensive snake is mostly active at night but also seen during the day. It feeds mostly on the eggs of reptiles and amphibians, is known to take small lizards in captivity, and also feeds on small soft-bodied insects (Minton and Anderson 1963; Daniels 1983; Whitaker and Captain 2004). The species ranges throughout much of India, west to eastern Iran, north to southern Turkmenistan, and east and south to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (Das 1994; Green et al. 2010). Like many other native species of wildlife, *Oligodon taeniolatus* remains relatively common in the semi-wild deciduous and scrub forests of the Aravalli Ridges in otherwise urban Delhi.

On 3 August 2019, during a routine field survey in Aravalli Biodiversity Park, Vasant Vihar (28°33'25.8"N, 77°08'50.7"E), I observed a coiled Variegated Kukri Snake, approximately 27 cm in total length, at a height of about 220 cm in an Indian Soapberry Tree (*Sapindus mukorossi*). The snake did not react to my presence and did not attempt to flee until I approached it very closely. At that point, it began moving toward the ends of terminals branches (Fig. 1). Air temperature was 29 °C and ground temperature 32 °C. Although Whitaker and Captain (2008) indicated that these snakes climb well (one was seen 3 m high on a wall), to the best of my knowledge, no records document arboreal behavior. My observation raises the question whether this behavior was motivated by a search for arboreal prey and, if so, why it has not been observed until now.

Acknowledgements

We are extremely thankful to Prof. C.R. Babu, Principal Investigator of the Biodiversity Parks Programme, for his continuous support, encouragement, and guidance. The authors also thank Dr. Debanik Mukherjee, Field Biologist, Aravalli Biodiversity Park, for help in the field.

Fig. 1. A Variegated Kukri Snake (*Oligodon taeniolatus*) on a branch of an Indian Soapberry Tree (*Sapindus mukorossi*). Photographs by the author.

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