



Nocturnal Foraging by Buff-striped Keelbacks, *Amphiesma stolatum* (Linnaeus 1758) (Reptilia: Squamata: Natricidae)

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The Buff-striped Keelback, *Amphiesma stolatum* (Linnaeus 1758), is a diurnally active snake with an extensive distribution in India and throughout much of southeastern Asia (Das 2002; Whitaker and Captain 2008). It exploits various natural and artificial habitats that include paddy fields, ponds, thick grass, bushes, gardens, and lowland forests, usually in the vicinity of water (Das 2002; Whitaker and Captain 2008). These snakes have a diverse diet. Young are known to feed on insects and tadpoles. Adults prey on fishes, anurans, lizards, rodents, and birds, as well as snails and other small invertebrates, including even scorpions (Das 2002; Khan 2002;

Whitaker and Captain 2008; Srinivasaulu et al. 2014). Ghosh and Chaudhuri (2015) also recorded scavenging behavior. Dissanayake and Wellappuliarachchi (2016) reported nocturnal predation by *A. stolatum* in Sri Lanka. Here we report a second instance of nocturnal feeding from Meghauli Serai, Chitwan, Nepal (27.569561°N, 84.201907°E; elevation 149 m asl).

At 2029 h on 16 July 2017, we encountered a juvenile *A. stolatum* holding a small frog (*Fejervarya* sp.) on a gravel path (Fig. 1) with Elephant Grass (*Typha elephantina*) on both sides. The snake had started swallowing the frog from



Fig. 1. A juvenile Buff-striped Keelback (*Amphiesma stolatum*) taking a small frog (*Fejervarya* sp.) at night. Photograph by Arpita Dutta.

behind. After about 10 min of observation, it moved into a bush with the frog in its mouth and finished swallowing it. Total time taken to devour the frog was about 17 min. The previous report of nocturnal foraging by Dissanayake and Wellappuliarachchi (2016) at the Mihintale Sanctuary, North Central Province, Sri Lanka involved an *A. stolatum* feeding on an Indian Burrowing Frog (*Sphaerotheca breviceps*). Also, at 1900 h on 20 April 2013, after an evening rain, AC witnessed an adult *A. stolatum* foraging near a marshland pond in Joka, Kolkata, West Bengal, India (22.450721°N, 80.309635°E; elevation 4.5 m asl). That snake was chasing a small Indian Toad (*Duttaphrynus melanostictus*), but failed to catch it. Hot, humid weather was a common factor in all of these observations.

DeGregorio et al. (2014) demonstrated that Eastern Ratsnakes (*Elaphe obsoleta*) can switch between diurnal and nocturnal activity. Snakes became more active when the temperature was optimal, regardless of whether it was light or dark. Sperry et al. (2013) noted that *E. obsoleta* is capable of altering activity patterns in response to short-term proximate cues (temperature and light), shifting in the wild from diurnal to nocturnal behavior over periods of weeks or months. Although our observations are anecdotal, we suggest that *A. stolatum* might engage in similar activity shifts. In humid conditions, when temperatures are optimal and amphibian prey

is abundant, these mostly diurnal snakes readily extend foraging behavior into the night.

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