



Unusual Climbing Ability by a Common Wolfsnake *Lycodon aulicus* (Linnaeus 1758) in India

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Wolfsnakes in the genus *Lycodon* are among the most widely distributed Asiatic snake taxa, ranging from the Caspian Sea to Indonesia and the Philippines (Mukherjee and Bhupati 2007). Fifty-one species are currently recognized (Uetz et al. 2017). The Common Wolfsnake, *Lycodon aulicus* (Linnaeus 1758), occurs throughout India, including Lakshadweep but not the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Whitaker and Captain 2004). This is one of the most abundant and frequently encountered snakes of the Indian plains, often seen near and even in human habitations (Daniel 2007). Herein we document an individual climbing a smooth, painted, vertical wall.

At 1715 h on 20 October 2017 during a rescue operation at Ispat Nagar, MIDC, Kalmeshwar, Nagpur, Maharashtra (21°33'01"N & 78°90'53"E), we encountered a young Common Wolfsnake (SVL ~550 mm) in a gap between bricks on a smooth, painted vertical wall about 3 m above the floor (Fig. 1). After 25 min of observation, the snake emerged from the depression and slowly started to climb the wall. The snake managed to hold itself on the smooth surface for about 7 min before falling to the ground.

Common Wolfsnakes are strictly nocturnal, grow to 840 mm (Patil and Mirza 2007), frequently climb, and feed largely on geckos and skinks (Whitaker and Captain 2004) as



Fig. 1. A Common Wolf Snake (*Lycodon aulicus*) ascending a smooth, vertical wall. Photographs by Swapnil A. Badhekar.

well as rodents and bats (Tank and Sharma 2016). Whitaker and Captain (2004) noted that these snakes can climb rough vertical walls with ease, Sinclair (1889) described an incident in which a Common Wolfsnake climbed vertical bamboo by catching the edges of its ventral shields against the bamboo lattice, but the snake described herein successfully managed to scale a smooth surface without any obvious means of traction.

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