

Are Feral Cats a New Threat for the Reptiles of Bangladesh?

Observations of Predation of Snakes and Lizards by Feral Cats

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We herein present observations of feral cats (*Felis catus*) preying on reptilian species in Bangladesh. On 26 February 2013 and 23 May 2019, we sighted a feral cat preying on a snake in Sadar Upazila, Potuakhali ($22^{\circ}21'12.6''N$, $90^{\circ}19'44.4''E$) and East Badarpur, Faridgonj, Chandpur ($23^{\circ}06'51.2''N$, $90^{\circ}46'59.4''E$), respectively. We could not identify the snake to species level in 2013 since the cat caught the snake and ran away, but we determined it to be in the genus *Dendrelaphis*. In 2019, we took a photograph and, using descriptions in Hasan et al. (2014), confirmed that the prey was a Painted Bronzeback (*Dendrelaphis pictus*) (Fig. 1). On 4 February 2020, during fieldwork in Service Area-1 of Padma Bridge, Dogachi, Munshiganj, Bangladesh ($23^{\circ}29'58.3''N$, $90^{\circ}16'29.2''E$), we noticed a feral cat preying on a Common Garden Lizard (*Calotes versicolor*). On two other occasions, we observed lizard predation at other sites in the same area. Unfortunately, we were unable to take photo-



Fig. 1. A feral cat (*Felis catus*) with a Painted Bronzeback (*Dendrelaphis pictus*) in its mouth. Photograph by Sultan Ahmed.



Fig. 2. A Striped Keelback (*Amphiesma stolatum*) that was injured by a feral cat. The snake was rescued and later photographed by Rafsun Rashed.

graphs. Subsequently, we also collected information through social media on observations made by local people (Fig. 2).

The Common Garden Lizard (Fig. 3) is a widely distributed species and the Painted Bronzeback is found in all but the northwestern parts of Bangladesh. Both have been assessed as species of least concern (LC) by IUCN Bangladesh (2015). Although they are considered to be of least concern, these species face a plethora of threats that include habitat destruction, insecticides, pollution, and human persecution, especially in human-dominated landscapes (Hasan et al. 2014; IUCN Bangladesh 2015). Feral cats are efficient predators that have become widely distributed throughout the world and have caused population declines and even local extinctions of native wild species on islands and continents (Bamford and Calver 2012). Mammals and birds are primary prey in nature, but they also feed on invertebrates,



Fig. 3. A Common Garden Lizard (*Calotes versicolor*) in its usual habitat. Photograph by Md. Fazle Rabbe.

amphibians, and reptiles (Kutt 2011). Feral cats have been known to prey on a wide variety of reptilian species, including geckos, skinks, snakes, and even turtles (Bonnaud et al. 2011). Woinarski et al. (2018) estimated that feral cats kill over 450 million reptiles annually in Australia.

We were unable to find the Painted Bronzeback and Common Garden Lizard listed as known prey of feral cats. Also, although several studies have addressed feral cat predation (e.g., Doherty et al. 2015; Bonnaud et al. 2011), we found no references to feral cat predation on reptiles in Bangladesh.

We consequently emphasize the need for research on predation by feral cats and its impact on wildlife in Bangladesh.

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