



Scavenging by Checkered Keelbacks, *Fowlea piscator* (Schneider 1799), at Ameenpur Lake, Hyderabad, India

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Thirty-four reptilian species in 12 families have been documented in and around Ameenpur Lake, which covers an area of 0.38 km² in Patancheru Mandal, Medak District, Telangana State, India (17.5208°N, 78.3297°E) (Sailu et al. 2017). The Checkered Keelback (*Fowlea piscator*) is distributed widely throughout southern Asia (Wallach et al. 2014; Uetz et al. 2021) and is likely the most abundant snake in India (Whitaker and Captain 2004). These snakes feed mainly on fish and frogs (Daniel 2002; Das 2010, 2012; Hasan et al. 2014; Hossain 2016) but occasionally eat turtles (Gyawali 2019), birds, small mammals (Whitaker and Captain 2004), and even arthropods (Wadeker 1963; Ahsan 1983; Pough et al. 2001; Hossain 2016).

During field trips to Ameenpur Lake, we observed Checkered Keelbacks scavenging fish. On 4 January 2018, we encountered an adult devouring a dead Catla (*Labeo catla*), and on 15 May 2018, we observed a subadult feeding on Tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*) waste (Fig. 1). Both were near a fish-waste dumping site.

Scavenging by snakes is not uncommon (e.g., DeVault and Krochmal 2002; Lillywhite et al. 2002; Ghosh and

Chaudhuri 2015), and Checkered Keelbacks have been documented scavenging a road-killed Wide-spread Fungoid Frog (*Hydrophylax bahuvistara*) (Wewhare and Pandey 2021) and discarded rice and chicken (Moktadir and Hasan 2016). Whether such scavenging is triggered by a reduction in natural food resources or merely an expression of the species' opportunistic feeding habits (Moktadir and Hasan 2016) is unknown.

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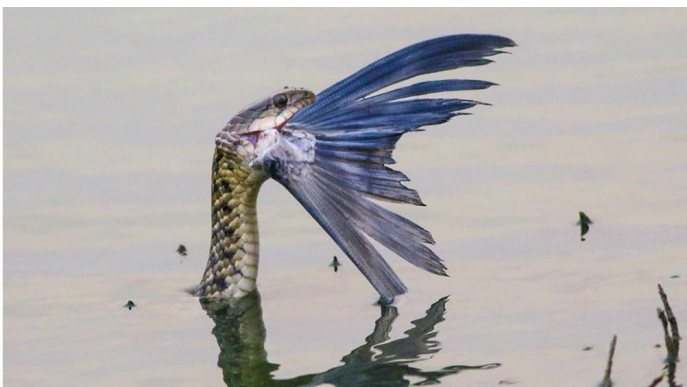


Fig. 1. An adult Checkered Keelback (*Fowlea piscator*) was scavenging a dead Catla (*Labeo catla*) (left) and a subadult feeding on Tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*) waste (right) at Ameenpur Lake in Patancheru Mandal, Medak District, Telangana State, India. Photographs by Parakuth Pradeep.

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