



# Feeding Behavior and Prey of Common Kraits, *Bungarus caeruleus* (Schneider 1801), from Western Maharashtra, India

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The Common Krait (*Bungarus caeruleus*) is one of the most widespread and medically important venomous snakes in southern Asia (Whitaker and Captain 2004). Although these snakes are primarily ophiophagus, lizards, frogs, and rodents have been reported in the diet (Slowinski 1994; Whitaker and Captain 2004; Pandey et al. 2020). They also are known to scavenge dead snakes and lizards (Mohapatra 2011; Deshmukh et al. 2016; Debata 2017). Diets of venomous snakes are known to be one of the main drivers of intraspecific venom variation; thus documenting diets of medically important snakes can be useful in studies of venoms, which in turn can be useful for snakebite mitigation (Daltry et al. 1996). In this note, we report two incidents of ophiophagy, including an observation of cannibalism by *B. caeruleus*.

At 2245 h on 3 April 2018, we observed a *B. caeruleus* around 80 cm in total length feeding on a Common Sandboa (*Eryx conicus*) (Fig. 1) in a cowshed surrounded by paddy fields in Chambhar Khind Village near Mahad, Maharashtra, India (18°05'17.19"N, 73°26'17.05"E). The krait was

holding the boa by its neck and the latter had constricted the neck of the krait in self-defense. After about 5 min, the boa started to lose its grip and the krait began swallowing it. Complete ingestion took about 15 min, after which, on the request of local residents, we removed the krait from the cowshed and released it in suitable nearby habitat. Chowdhury and Choudhuri (2017) reported *B. caeruleus* feeding on a Whitaker’s Sandboa (*E. whitakeri*) but, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first report of a Common Krait feeding on a Common Sandboa.

At 2015 h on 4 October 2020, we observed two entwined Common Kraits (Fig. 2) in the compound of a house in Ladavli Village near Mahad, Maharashtra, India (18°06'21.64"N, 73°24'40.17"E). The larger individual (ca. 1 m in total length) was holding a slightly smaller krait by the head. After about 10 min, the smaller krait started to lose its grip and the larger snake began to swallow it. Complete ingestion took about 12 min, after which the krait was removed away from the vicinity of the house and released in suitable



**Fig. 1.** A Common Krait (*Bungarus caeruleus*) feeding on a Common Sandboa (*Eryx conicus*). Photographs by Pranav Kulkarni.



**Fig. 2.** Cannibalism in Common Kraits (*Bungarus caeruleus*). Photographs by Pranav Kulkarni.

nearby habitat. Cannibalism in *B. caeruleus* has been reported previously (Smith 1913; Dattatri 1984; Yadav and Shinde 2021).

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