



Predation on a House Gecko, *Hemidactylus* sp., by a Spotted Supple Skink, *Riopa punctata* (Linnaeus 1758)

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Skinks are known to be opportunistic predators (e.g., Suranjan Karunarathna and Thasun Amarasinghe 2010; Manicom and Schwarzkopf 2010; Civantos et al. 2013). However, relatively few reports document the diets of skinks, especially predation on other reptiles (Attum et al. 2004; Civantos et al. 2013; Patil et al. 2021). The semifossorial scincid genus *Riopa* is mainly associated with leaf litter, rocks, rotting logs, and other cover in semi-arid regions, grasslands, and urban areas, where they are known to feed on arthropods, annelids, snails, and other small invertebrates (Geissler et al. 2011; Freitas et al. 2020; Bhilala et al. 2021). Herein we report an observation of a Spotted Supple Skink (*Riopa punctata*) feeding on a house gecko (*Hemidactylus* sp.).

At 1223 h on 14 January 2023, we observed a *Riopa punctata* preying on a house gecko (*Hemidactylus* sp.) in Buthani podu, BRT Tiger Reserve, Karnataka, India (11.895694, 77.135694). The gecko was initially observed foraging on a stone wall (Fig. 1A) before the skink grasped it at midbody (Fig. 1B). The skink shook the gecko sideways while the latter struggled and lashed its tail (Fig. 1C). The skink then retreated into a small crevice where it succeeded in killing the gecko (Fig. 1D), after which the skink ingested the

gecko head-first. Although the skink moved farther into the crevice, which precluded further photographs, we did observe complete ingestion of the prey.

Many records document skinks feeding on invertebrates (e.g., Murthy 1990; Duffield and Bull 1998) and even seeds (Twiggs et al. 1996; Tocher 2003). In India, Common Skinks (*Eutropis carinata*) are known to feed on house geckos (*Hemidactylus* sp.) (Deuti et al. 2020; Patil et al. 2021) and instances of *E. carinata* preying on a garden lizard (*Calotes* sp.) and *Hemidactylus* sp. were recorded by Deuti et al. (2020). Skinks in two genera (*Mochlus* and *Lygosoma*), which are closely related to the genus *Riopa* (Freitas et al. 2019), have been reported to feed on vertebrates, *Mochlus sundevallii* in South Africa (Costa et al. 2022) and a *Lygosoma* sp. in captivity consumed juvenile frogs, geckos, and agamas (Wagner et al. 2009). To the best of our knowledge, our observation represents the first record of a *Riopa punctata* feeding on a gekkonid lizard.

Acknowledgements

We thank Surya Narayanan for help in writing this article and Avrajjal Ghosh for species identification and for providing additional information.

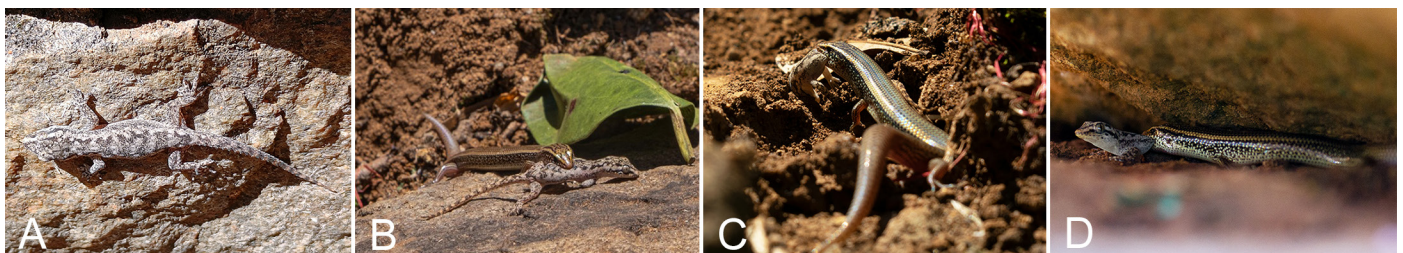


Figure 1. A House Gecko (*Hemidactylus* sp.) on a stone wall (A); a Spotted Supple Skink (*Riopa punctata*) grasping the gecko at midbody (B); the gecko struggles and lashes its tail (C); and the skink retreats with its prey into a crevice (D). Photographs by Ryan Satish (A), Jayshree Borgohain (B), Rohan Sharma (C), and Naveen M. (D).

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