



Predation on a Malabar Tree Toad (*Pedostibes tuberculosus*) (Anura: Bufonidae) by a Fishing Spider (*Dolomedes* sp.) (Araneae: Dolomedidae) in a Riparian Ecosystem in India

Deva Charan S.S. and Sidharth R.

Centre for Wildlife Studies, Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU), Pookode, India
(deva15charan@gmail.com; <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-8689-5595>)

The Malabar Tree Toad, *Pedostibes tuberculosus* Günther 1876, the sole species in the genus *Pedostibes* (Chandramouli and Amarasinghe 2016), is confined to the Western Ghats (Dinesh and Radhakrishnan 2013). Unlike many other toads, these climb trees and generally descend only during the breeding season. They tend to occupy habitats near streams on trees and inside tree cavities (Aravind et al. 2024). As in most anurans, locomotor ability tends to be inadequate in early stages of development compared to adults. Coupled with reduced size, this increases vulnerability to predation (Formanowicz 1986; Jara and Perotti 2010).

Over 100 species of Fishing Spiders in the aranean genus *Dolomedes* (Latreille 1804) occur on every continent except Antarctica and presumably South America (World Spider Catalog 2025). They are opportunistic ambush predators that are cursorial and have the ability to move on water, mainly inhabiting stream edges as well as terrestrial habitats, where

they prey on both invertebrates and vertebrates, including small fish, frogs, and tadpoles (Buddle et al. 2004; Michalko et al. 2019).

We herein report predation on a juvenile *Pedostibes tuberculosus* by a Fishing Spider in a riparian ecosystem (Fig. 1) in the vicinity of Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (11.53126, 76.01860; elev. 803 m asl) on 24 March 2025. The spider was on a rock at the edge of the stream with a Gosner-stage-46 (Gosner 1960) Malabar Tree Toad in its mouth (Fig. 1). The spider had grasped the toad by the head; the toad, being smaller than the spider, was unable to escape its grasp and was dead at the time of our observation. The toad was identified by Dr. Anil Zachariah based on diagnostic characteristics that included a silvery yellow dorsum, a white band extending from below the eyes to the axillae and along the flanks, and a distinct white band in the lumbar region (Fig. 1) (Daniel 1963; Dinesh and

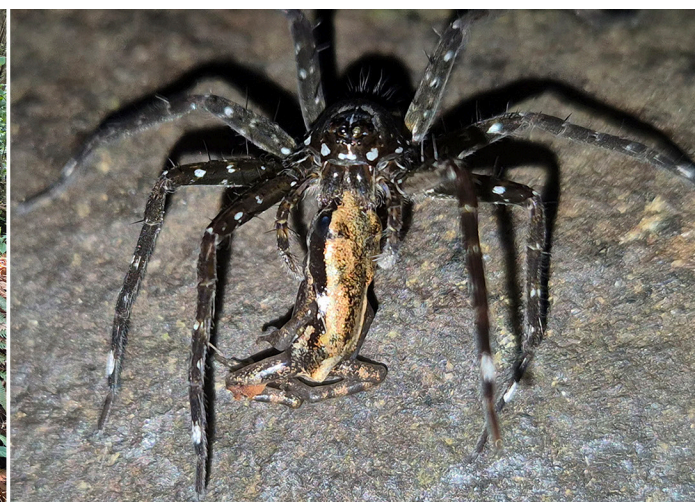


Figure 1. Riparian habitat in the vicinity of Kerala Veterinary and Animal Science University, Wayanad, Kerala, India (left), where we observed predation on juvenile Malabar Tree Toad (*Pedostibes tuberculosus*) by a Fishing Spider (*Dolomedes* sp.) (right). Photographs by Deva Charan S.S.

Radhakrishnan 2008, 2013; Chandramouli and Amarasinghe 2016). The spider was identified by Gautam Kadam.

Although Fishing Spiders hunt aquatic organisms, juveniles of terrestrial organisms (e.g., worms, frogs, and lizards), which are small and slow, can become easy targets. Reports of predation by *Dolomedes* spp. on anurans are in Cabrera-Guzmán et al. (2015), Eversole (2021), and Park et al. (2024). However, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first report of predation on *Pedostibes tuberculosus* by a spider in the genus *Dolomedes*.

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