



Attempted Predation on an Ailao Moustache Toad, *Leptobrachium ailaonicum* (Yang, Chen, and Ma 1983) by a Mountain Pitviper (*Ovophis* sp.)

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The Ailao Moustache Toad (*Leptobrachium ailaonicum*), which occurs at elevations of 800–2,600 m asl in Lao Cai, Lai Chau, and Son La Provinces in northern Vietnam and central Yunnan Province in China, is listed as being of Least Concern on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Luong et al. 2021; IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group 2022). Other than descriptions of male parental care (constructing and guarding underwater nests in slow-moving streams; IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group 2022), little is known about the natural history of this species, including its predators.

At 2246 h on 6 June 2025, during field surveys on Mount Po Ma Lung in Lai Chau Province in northwestern Vietnam adjacent to the China-Vietnam border (22.61548 103.47963; elev. 2,643 m asl) we observed an adult Mountain Pitviper (*Ovophis* sp.) with an adult male *L. ailaonicum* in its jaws (Fig. 1) 0.5 m from a 2-m-wide slow-moving stream with a maximum depth of ~ 0.7 m. The frog attempted to pull away from the snake with its forelimbs, but the snake retained a firm grip anchored by the distal half of its body and tail coiled around plant stems. We observed the event for several minutes before moving on to avoid further disturbance. We do not know how this event concluded.

The frog was identified to species as morphological characters concurred with those described in Yang et al. (1983) and Fei et al. (2012), and was sexed as a male based on the presence of spines on the upper lip (present only in males of this species). We were unable to identify the Mountain Pitviper to species, of which several are known to occur in the region, including the Pingbian Mountain Pitviper (*Ovophis anitae*), Chinese Mountain Pitviper (*O. monticola*), and Guanyinshan Mountain Pitviper (*O. zhaermii*) (Nguyen et



Figure 1. A Mountain Pitviper (*Ovophis* sp.) attempting to consume an adult male Ailao Moustache Toad (*Leptobrachium ailaonicum*) in Lai Chau Province, Vietnam. Photograph by Luan Thanh Nguyen.

al. 2009; Liu et al. 2025). Higher-resolution images might have captured additional details (e.g., scalation) that could have helped us identify the snake.

Other dietary records of snakes in the genus *Ovophis* include rodents (Zhao et al. 1998; Mao et al. 2010), shrews, bats, small lizards and snakes, and anuran amphibians (Tillack et al. 2003; Mori and Toda 2011). Reports on predators of *Leptobrachium* in the literature are sparse. Records document a freshwater crab and the natricid *Opisthotropis alcalai* feeding on larvae of *L. lumadorum* in the Philippines (Lorenzo et al. 2017; Maglangit et al. 2023). Mancuso et al. (2023) reported that *L. ailaonicum* has evolved resistance to alpha-neurotoxic elapid snake venoms, suggesting that elapid snakes might be important predators of this species.

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