

# Observation of a *Varanus salvator* consuming potentially dangerous waste refuse in Karamjal, Bangladesh Sundarbans mangrove forest

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*Varanus salvator* Laurenti, 1768 (Asian water monitor) is the largest monitor lizard found in Bangladesh (Khan, 2008; Hasan et al., 2014) where it is considered Vulnerable (IUCN Bangladesh, 2015). Anthropocentric pressures, whether directly or indirectly, are considered the primary threats to biodiversity loss across Bangladesh with animal numbers decreasing from environmental change. However, some species, including monitor lizards, are more flexible in their behaviour which allows them to adapt to human altered ecosystems. Monitor lizards are well known scavengers and this note records potential problems for these lizards when scavenging around human habitations.

On 4 August 2016, 11:38 (Bangladesh Standard Time) an adult *V. salvator* was observed scavenging among aquatic vegetation in tidal water behind a building at Karamjal ecotourism center (N 22°25'43.19"/ E 89°35'24.96"), Bagerhat, Bangladesh. Here we observed the lizard consume a piece of polythene bag from an open garbage site near the ecotourism office kitchen (Fig. 1). The lizard tried to engulf the polythene bag by moving its head up and down in a sideways lashing movement. After about 10 minutes the lizard succeeded in consuming the whole section of polythene

This type of behaviour is clearly unusual and to the best of our knowledge has not been recorded previously. We assume that the lizard had mistaken the plastic for a natural food item. Consumption of such a man made products is likely very harmful for the lizards and in terms of conservation, action should be taken by companies to clean up the area and not discard dangerous waste materials into the environment.

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**Figure 1.** *V. salvator* from Karamjal, Bangladesh Sundarbans consuming a piece of polythene

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