

A banded krait *Bungarus fasciatus* scavenging on a water snake

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The banded krait *Bungarus fasciatus* has a wide geographical range that extends through south and south-east Asia as far east as southern China (Ahmed et al., 2009; Knierim et al., 2019). It occurs up to 2,300 m above sea level and occupies numerous habitat types including forests, agricultural areas and domestic gardens. The species is primarily nocturnal and will feed on a wide array of prey but is well known as a frequent predator of other snakes, a cannibal and an occasional scavenger (Daniel, 2002; Kalita et al., 2021; Knierim et al., 2017). A wide range of snake species have been reported to feed by scavenging such as *Agkistrodon piscivorus* feeding on dead fish in an intertidal zone, *Bungarus caeruleus* scavenging on a road-killed conspecific, and *Malpolon monspessulanus* feeding on a putrescent rat (Lillywhite et al., 2002; Deshmukh et al., 2016; Deso & Bonnet, 2023).

On 3 August 2022 at around 19:16 h, we observed a *B. fasciatus* consuming the dead body of a water snake in Assam, India near the main street of Mayong village (26° 15'52.0" N 92° 02'05.7" E). The krait had nearly finished consuming the dead snake by the time we arrived at the location, since only the tail of the dead water snake was visible to us, which the krait took just three minutes to ingest fully before moving off. The presence of maggots on the tail of the dead snake indicated clearly that the specimen was decomposing. Based on the dorsal colouration of the tail we think that the ingested snake was a checkered keelback *Fowlea piscator*. It seems that the ingested snake had been trapped as the tail was wrapped around some fishing net that the krait consumed along with the tail. Observations such as this one help us to understand that scavenging behaviour might be more common in snakes than previously thought.

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Figure 1. A banded krait *Bungarus fasciatus* scavenging on a water snake, believed to be *Fowlea piscator*, in Assam, India. Note that the dead snake is wrapped around a fishing net which the krait consumed along with the maggots that were on with the tail.

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