

Notes on breeding of the barred wolf snake (*Lycodon striatus*) in Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, India

RAVIKUMAR CLEAMANT KIRAN KUMAR¹, AROCKIANATHAN SAMSON^{2*},
PALANISAMY SANTHOSHKUMAR^{3*}, BALASUNDARAM RAMAKRISHNAN²
& CHANDRASHEKARUNI GNANESWAR¹

¹Department of Zoology and Wildlife Biology, Government Arts College, Udthagamandalam-643 002, The Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, India

²Mammalogy and Forest Ecology wing, Department of Zoology and Wildlife Biology, Government Arts College, Udthagamandalam-643 002 The Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, India

³Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Udthagamandalam-643 002, The Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, India

*Corresponding author Email: kingvulture1786@gmail.com

The barred wolf snake (*Lycodon striatus*) is a non-venomous colubrid snake distributed in south Asia (India, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka), as well as eastern and north-eastern Iran, western Tajikistan, southern Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In India, this species have been recorded from Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Punjab (The Reptile Database, 2017). Many details of the breeding biology of Indian snakes are poorly understood but some are known to be prolific breeders, and most reproduce seasonally (Nixon, 2015). Breeding seasonally can affect many aspects of a species biology, and in turn affect its life history and demography (Lemes-Espinal et al., 2003). This note reports on the breeding season and habitat, juvenile size and clutch size of *L. striatus* in the Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, India.

On 15th November 2015, 11:45h a juvenile snake was observed at a settlement of Kurumba tribals near Mettupalayam (N 11.34270°, E 76.87007°) in Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, India. This settlement is located along a river side habitat where the major forest type is mixed deciduous (Champion & Seth, 1968). Additional juvenile snakes were observed coming out one by one from a hole in a kitchen wall. A total of nine individuals were observed (Fig. 1). After the wall was broken we found nine egg shells indicating all snakes in the clutch had hatched successfully (Fig. 2). The clutch size, if deposited by a single female is larger than what has previously been reported. The juveniles were identified as barred wolf snakes using a field guide (Whitaker & Captain, 2004). The total length of juveniles ranged between 153 mm and 171mm, eggs between 20 mm and 25 mm.

Previous records reported the clutch size ranged between two to four eggs (Smith, 1943; Das, 2002; Whitaker & Captain, 2004). The literature indicates that this species deposits eggs in the month of July and August (Smith, 1943), April (Das, 2002) and August (Whitaker & Captain, 2004) with the incubation period usually 50-60 days depending upon geographical location and temperature (Das, 2002; Whitaker & Captain, 2004). It is possible that the eggs were laid around August to September, and hence juveniles were observed in November.



Figure 1. Nine individuals of *L. striatus* collected from a hole in a kitchen wall



Figure 2. Total of nine egg shells of *L. striatus*

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