

First report of death feigning behaviour in the yellow collared wolf snake (*Lycodon flavicollis*)

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Death feigning or thanatosis is a state of tonic immobility, exhibited by certain species of snakes as a response to external stimuli, including predation attempts (e.g. Bhattarai et al., 2017). Currently, this behaviour is reported from *Xenochrophis piscator*, *Coelognathus radiates*, *Lycodon aulicus* and *Pseudoxenodon macrops* (Vogel & Kam Han, 2010; Mirza et al., 2011; Bhosale & Thite, 2013) among snakes from the Indian subcontinent. On 25 March 2015, the first author (SKM) rescued an adult male specimen (Snout to vent length - 296 mm, tail length - 76 mm) of *L. flavicollis* (Fig. 1) from a house in the vicinity of Bannerghatta Biological Park (12.812°N, 77.578°E; WGS 84, 929 m elev) around 22.00h IST (Indian standard time). The individual was identified based on the 'type' description by Mukherjee & Bhupathy, 2007. On handling, the individual exhibited no aggressive behaviour and was bagged quickly. Fifteen minutes later, the snake was placed on the ground for documentation and photography, during which it made several attempts to escape. After approximately five minutes the snake stopped moving and started rolling upside down revealing its ventral scales, remaining in this position for approximately five to ten minutes (Fig. 2). SKM located and palpated the heart, revealing an active pulse. On manually inverting the snake to stimulate, the individual moved haphazardly, possibly in a vague attempt to escape. The snake was bagged again and kept under observation at Bannerghatta Zoo Hospital. The snake was released the next day near to the capture location, uneventfully.

For snakes, death feigning includes tonic immobility often coupled with mouth gapping and hanging/protrusion of the tongue (Bhosale & Thite, 2013). However, in this observation we only recorded immobility and rolling of body, without mouth gapping, similar to observations of death feigning behaviour in other *Lycodon* spp (Mirza et al., 2011).

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Figure 1. *L. flavicollis* from Tumkur, Karnataka



Figure 2. *L. flavicollis* from Bannerghatta, Karnataka exhibiting death feigning behaviour

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