First observation of male combat in the greater black krait *Bungarus niger*

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On the 2nd October 2017 at 13:53 h, we witnessed two adult male *B. niger* engaging in male combat (Fig. 1) near Lamchhip village, Aizawl District, Mizoram, north-east India (23° 26.497’ N, 92° 47.114’ E; 1,177 m asl). The snakes were caught in the act and the bout was observed for about 10 minutes, until they moved out of sight into a thicket along the road, continuing with the combat. The two snakes intertwined their bodies while moving forward (Fig. 1A - D), raised their head almost up to a fifth of their total length (Fig. 1D) and tried to push the head of the opponent to the ground (Fig. 1A - B). One male was observed biting the neck of its opponent (Fig. 1C), which is an apparently rare phenomenon in male combat (Senter et al., 2014).

During the encounter, no female was sighted nearby although this would be expected as male combat in snakes is normally associated with competition to mate with a
female. It seems likely that in this case the female remained hidden in the adjacent vegetation. As to the fate of the male that was bitten on the neck, we do not know if it suffered any ill effects. It is believed that venomous species are less susceptible to their own venom but are not completely resistant to it, a recent report of a lethal self-inflicted bite in the case of the lesser black krait *Bungarus lividus* is a case in point (Purkayastha et al., 2021).

**REFERENCES**


*Accepted: 23 October 2020*