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SHORT COMMUNICATION

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Sticky traps for rodents can be fatal for snakes in India

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Sticky (glue) traps for rodent control were introduced into India in the 1980–90s and have been effective for the management of house mice and rats (Srivastava & Srivastava, 1985). Nevertheless, the use of such traps in India is in violation of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, Environment Protection Act, 1986, Indian Forest Act, 1927 and Indian Penal Code, but due to ignorance they are used and threaten our wildlife. Such traps have also been used to capture lizards and other reptiles for ecological studies but the ensuing mortality rates are high (Whiting, 1998; Glor et al., 2000; Vargas et al., 2000).

In Pune, snakes are increasingly at risk from sticky (glue) traps. We responded to a total of 67 snake rescue calls from January 2023 to November 2023, out of which 7 snakes were found in sticky traps (Table 1 & Fig. 1). Six of these snakes died on the same or other day, one snake was rescued and treated at veterinary hospital and released after 7 days.

The use of sticky trap risks capture of non-target animals including snakes, where death comes very slowly by suffocation, stress, dehydration or starvation (Vargas et al., 2000). We believe that snakes fall prey to these traps as they feed on rats and follow their scent to the trap but the snakes may also fall victim to the trap even before the rodents arrive at them. As soon as the snakes reach the trap, the front part of their body gets stuck and while they move to free themselves, the rest of their body also gets stuck. Attempting to remove a snake from a trap is extremely challenging and may result in permanent damage to its scales and skin.

The fatality rates are high with sticky traps (Vargas et al., 2000) and this risk to wildlife has resulted in restrictions on the use of these traps in some countries, such as the USA, United Kingdom and New Zealand (Chapple, 2016; Baker et al., 2020; Fay, 2022) and India. Further studies to quantify the extent of this problem would be of value in understanding the full impact of this type of trap and may provide evidence for the need for enforcement of the rules against them.

Figure 1. Snake victims of sticky traps in Pune, India in 2023- **A.** Common wolf snake *Lycodon aulicus*, **B.** Common trinket snake *Coelognathus helena*, **C.** and **D.** Juvenile spectacled cobra *Naja naja*

Table 1. Details of snakes found in sticky traps in Pune, Maharashtra, India, in 2023

Snake species	Age	Date	Location	WPA*	Remarks
Coelognathus helena	Subadult	6 January	Residential	Sch II (Part C)	Found dead
Ptyas mucosa	Subadult	18 January	Residential	Sch I (Part C)	Died after 2 days
Lycodon aulicus	Subadult	25 January	Residential	Sch II (Part C)	Died same day
Naja naja	Juvenile	21 February	Industrial	Sch I (Part C)	Died after 1 day
Lycodon aulicus	Juvenile	11 March	Research Institute	Sch II (Part C)	Found dead
Oligodon tillacki	Subadult	13 April	Residential	Sch II (Part C)	Died after 2 days
Naja naja	Juvenile	22 October	Residential	Sch I (Part C)	Rescued, treated and released

*WPA = Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

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