

## Scavenging behaviour of the hump-nosed pit viper *Hypnale hypnale* in Goa, India

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Scavenging is an opportunistic feeding behaviour that has been commonly observed in snakes (DeVault & Krochmal, 2002). The hump-nosed pit viper *Hypnale hypnale* (Merrem, 1820), is widely distributed across Sri Lanka and the southern Western Ghats of India up to 16° latitude (Smith, 1943; Whitaker, 1978). In Goa, *H. hypnale* inhabits a variety of habitats, including semi-evergreen forests, moist deciduous forests and plantations. It is often found in terrestrial leaf litter or semi-arboreal shrubs where it is primarily an ambush predator, preying on skinks, frogs and lizards (Sawant et al., 2010).

On 14 November 2024, at approximately 19:25 h, we observed a rodent killed by a vehicle on the Mollem Highway in Goa (15° 22'22.6" N, 74° 13'53.7" E), India. Its body was severely ruptured, evidenced by intestinal rupturing but the head was intact. Shortly afterward, a hump-nosed pit viper approached the carcass and inspected it from head to tail. The snake began consuming the rodent headfirst. While consuming the rodent, the snake slowly retreated towards the side of the road into leaf litter (Fig. 1), probably as a response to a large crowd of people that had gathered to watch. It completely ingested the carcass within approximately ten minutes. During our frequent field visits to the Mollem Forest region, we have observed

numerous road kill incidents involving rodents, amphibians, and reptiles. This observation provides the first conclusive evidence of *H. hypnale* scavenging, indicating that this species, while primarily an ambush predator, also adopts this opportunistic foraging strategy.

### REFERENCES

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**Figure 1.** The hump-nosed pit viper *Hypnale hypnale* feeding on a road-killed rodent, slowly retreating back into leaf litter with the partially ingested carcass

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