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NATURAL HISTORY NOTE

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First record of galloping in a free-ranging adult mugger crocodile *Crocodylus palustris*

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Galloping in crocodilians is rarely reported from the wild and is generally linked to flight responses to perceived threats or sudden stimuli. Unlike the typical belly crawl or 'high walk', galloping involves all four limbs leaving the ground simultaneously, where the hind legs push off in quick succession, followed by the forelegs, creating a moment of suspension before the cycle repeats. This enables the animal to achieve surprising speeds over short distances (Renous et al., 2002). This behaviour has mainly been recorded in *Crocodylus johnstoni, Crocodylus porosus* and *Crocodylus niloticus*, but other crocodile species may also be capable of such agile movement (Hussein et al., 2022). The records of galloping are more common in juvenile crocodiles than in adults (Parrish, 1987).

The mugger crocodile *Crocodylus palustris* is distributed across several regions of South Asia and can weigh anywhere between 55–100 kg, and they grow to 4–5 m in length (Da Silva & Lenin, 2010). In February 2021, during the annual mugger crocodile census in Kutch, India, we observed a wild adult mugger crocodile, approximately 2.5 m long, exhibiting a rapid galloping gait, which is uncommon for muggers. Galloping behaviour in other crocodiles has been observed during hunting, escaping threats or in response to territorial disputes (Zug, 1974). An aerial drone was used during the survey, which startled the animal, resulting in an abrupt transition from a stationary position to high-speed, galloping movement from land to water before it submerged (Fig. 1; BHS video, 2026).

In muggers, galloping has only been recorded as an anecdotal movement in captivity (Hutchinson et al., 2019). To the best of our knowledge, ours is the first record of a wild, adult mugger galloping, which itself is rare since most

Figure 1. A galloping adult mugger crocodile *Crocodylus palustris* filmed using an aerial drone

incidences of galloping in crocodiles have been observed in juveniles. This observation aligns with a recent study on crocodilian locomotion in terrestrial habitats (Hutchinson et al., 2019) and suggests that crocodilians possess greater locomotor diversity than previously documented.

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