



Ophiophagy by banded krait (*Bungarus fasciatus*) exposed by a road kill

Bungarus fasciatus (Schneider, 1801) is a nocturnal, large bodied krait species, widely distributed throughout South and Southeast Asia (Ahmed *et al.* 2009). It is found at a variety of habitats with relatively large home ranges (Knierim *et al.* 2019). The ophiophagous diet of this venomous snake comprises a broad spectrum of prey items, even including its congener *B. caeruleus*. It also preys on skinks, fish, frogs, and eggs of snakes (Daniels 2002, Knierim *et al.* 2017, Luu & Ha 2018, Biakzuala & Lalremsanga 2019). On 16 June 2021, at 2105 h, a fresh road-kill of an adult male *B. fasciatus* (total length 1.46 m) was observed on a newly constructed tarmac road (width of road ~6 m; Fig. 1A) at New Khawlek (23°19'16.00"N, 92°38'36.95"E; alt. 715 m a.s.l.), Lunglei District, Mizoram, India. It seems the krait remained vulnerably exposed on the motorway while consuming a redbtail pit-viper, *Trimeresurus erythrurus* (Cantor, 1839) (total length 48.8 cm), and was fatally run over while busy swallowing more than half of the length of its prey (Fig. 1B), most probably a few minutes prior to our arrival at the site. The vehicles badly damaged both snakes, even causing the anterior half of the swallowed pit-viper to poke out of the oesophagus of the krait. After taking photographs, the carcasses were removed. During the course of our herpetological surveys in the State, we have rarely seen *B. fasciatus* crossing a motorway. *T. erythrurus* was the most commonly encountered species on roads especially during showers at night time. Mortality in vehicular traffic is a common threat, but there have been limited studies evaluating the potential impacts on populations (Rytwinski & Fahrig 2015).

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Plate 28



Figure 1. (A) arrow showing the road-killed spot on the newly constructed tarmac road; (B) road-killed *Bungarus fasciatus* with its half swallowed prey, *Trimeresurus erythrurus*; (B1) close up of the prey; (B2) everted hemipenis of the road-killed *B. fasciatus*.