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Unusual foraging behaviour of *Naja kaouthia* at the Moyingye Wetlands Bird Sanctuary, Myanmar

The monocled cobra, *Naja kaouthia* and the banded krait, *Bungarus fasciatus* are common residents of Myanmar's paddies. Neither species has had a detailed examination of its diet in Myanmar or elsewhere in southern and south-eastern Asia. In general reports (e.g., Cox et al., 1998), *N. kaouthia* eats frogs, snakes, small birds and mammals; *B. fasciatus* eats lizards, snakes and small mammals. Our experiences suggest that *N. kaouthia* is mainly crepuscular and *B. fasciatus* is strictly nocturnal.

The above dietary information applies generally to the krait and cobra at the Moyingye Wetland Bird Sanctuary (17° 35.305'N; 96° 34.735'E; Bago Division, Myanmar); however, one of us (SWK) has occasionally seen the occurrence of both species in fish traps. The Moyingye W. B. S. was created by the damming of three streams (Pyin Bon Gyi, Win Be Inn, Payakalay) flowing into the Waw River. The damming expanded the original wild rice marsh and created a large, moderately shallow permanent lake. Nearly all of the 104 km² of the sanctuary are flooded during the height of the monsoon; during the height of the dry season, only the lake and the immediately bordering marshes and paddies contain water, approximately a quarter of the monsoonal wetland area. At all times, the waters of the Sanctuary are heavily fished with line nets and fish traps.

Two fishing methods capture snakes as well as fish. The line nets capture *Enhydris enhydris*, *Homalopsis buccata*, *Ptyas mucosus* and *N. kaouthia*. The latter two are rarely drowned owing to their entanglement on the surface, having been entangled in the net as they crossed open water. The fish traps capture *H. buccata*, *B. fasciatus* and *N. kaouthia*. In 2002, SWK saw three fish traps, each containing a krait, and two traps each with a cobra. Both cobras contained one or more fish in their stomachs; neither krait contained fish. Although abundant, *Xenochrophis piscator* is not seen in the traps.

These observations suggest that the cobras intentionally entered the traps to catch the trapped fish. The kraits trap entry is less easily explained. The fish traps are not placed abutting the banks of the paddies, although they are not distant, ranging roughly from 10 to 50 cm from the water's edge. Traps are placed to allow the top of the trap to be at the water's surface or projecting slightly above. Kraits regularly forage at the water edge, and possibly with rice stubble or aquatic vegetation forming a flexible substrate, they venture out on the water and are intercepted accidentally by the traps.

Fishes are not considered a major dietary item for Asian cobras; however, fishes have been noted in the diet of some species. Only Das in his recent fieldguide (2002) lists fish as an occasional food item for *N. kaouthia* and *N. naja* in India. No other reports of Asian cobra eating fish have been discovered in our literature search. Three African cobras are reported as occasional fish eaters: *Naja melanoleuca* (Luiselli et al., 1997); *Naja nigricollis* (Luiselli et al., 1997); *Pseudohaje goldii* (Pauwels et al., 1999). The observations at the Moyingye W. B. S. suggest that fish traps with several struggling fish create an enticing lure to a cobra on the prowl for food. Is this behaviour peculiar to Moyingye or does it occur elsewhere in Myanmar and southern/south-eastern Asia? We shall attempt to obtain this information from other comparable paddy-lake areas in Myanmar.

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