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Bugs R All
Newsletter of the
Invertebrate Conservation & Information Network of South Asia (ICINSA)

# GIANT CRAB SPIDER

## Predation of Common House Gecko *Hemidactylus frenatus* Schlegel, 1836 by Giant Crab Spider *Heteropoda venatoria* Linnaeus, 1767

IUCN Red List:

Global — Not Evaluated

**Giant Crab Spider feeding on Common House Gecko**

**Arachnida**
[Class of Spiders, Harvestmen, Scorpions, Mites, etc.]

**Araneae**
[Order of Spiders]

**Sparassidae**
[Family of Giant Crab Spider]

***Heteropoda venatoria***
[Giant Crab Spider]

Species described by Linnaeus in 1767

Spiders are top predators of arthropods in terrestrial ecosystems, and they play a critical ecological role by keeping insect populations under check (Schmitz 2008). Some species of spiders under different families viz. Lycosidae, Sparassidae, Theraphosidae were observed killing and eating frogs and lizards (Kaston 1965; Formanowicz et al., 1981; Stewart 1985; Brown et al., 1996; Conniff 1996; Hemidy et al., 2010; Diniz 2011). *Heteropoda venatoria* (Linnaeus), (Sparassidae: Araneae: Arachnida) is a highly valued species because they capture and feed on cockroaches and other domestic pests. *H. venatoria* is a common species across tropical countries, including Bangladesh. A total of 11 species under 4 genera

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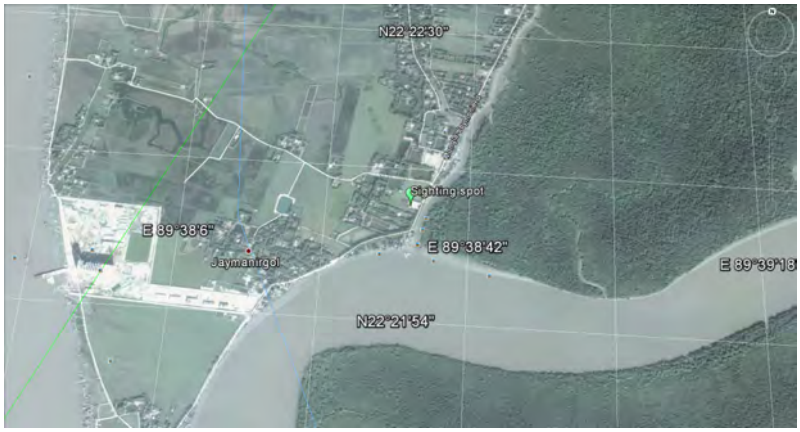
of Sparassidae family have been recorded from Bangladesh. They are commonly known as Giant crab spiders on account of their large size and crab like legs (Sethi & Tikader 1988). This ability along with its adaptability to human habitations, helps to explain its frequent occurrence in houses, barns, sheds, under boards on the ground, and in other sheltered areas (Edwards 1979). *H. venatoria* do not use webs to capture prey. They have strong chelicerae used to capture the prey on which they feed. Poison is also injected into the prey from glands extending from the chelicerae (Sethi & Tikader 1988). The flattened body enables this large spider to fit into surprisingly small cracks and crevices (Shukla 2008). *Hemidactylus frenatus* (Squamata: Gekkonidae) is predominantly a nocturnal, often found inside buildings feeding on insects that are considered to be pests (Tyler 1961; Newbery & Jones 2007; Biswas & Raychaudhuri 2006).

**Global Distribution: Across tropical countries**

Bangladesh (Bagerhat, Barisal, Faridpur, Jhenidah, Pabna, Rangpur).




**Sighting map of *Heteropoda venatoria* in the coordinate of 22$^0$ 22'7.52"N; 89$^0$ 38'34.66"E at Jaymoni, Chandpie Range, Sundarbans in the Bagerhat, Bangladesh (Map source: Google earth).**

This current article is a report of predation on *H. frenatus* individual by *H. venatoria*. This observation was made at Jaymoni, Chandpie Range Sundarban in the Bagerhat district (22$^0$22'7.52"N; 89$^0$38'34.66"E) Southwest of Bangladesh. The body length of *H. venatoria* measured approximately length of 2.3cm, and had a 11cm long leg. We observed one individual of this species preying a *H. frenatus* on a wooden pillar was sighted on 12 Aug, 2016, at 20.35 (GMT +6). The body length of *H. frenatus* was not measured because, it was already half eaten. The spider was sucking the fluids from the partially digested body of *H. frenatus* far before the observation was started, when both *H. frenatus* and *H. venatoria* foraged. Spider (*H. venatoria*) gradually moved its pedipalp began to suck the fluids from head of *H. frenatus* then from rest of the body. Spiders are one of the most groups of invertebrate predator entire terrestrial ecosystem that feed almost exclusively on insects. The observation of gecko-catching spider is not that peculiar if we consider the fact that a number of large sized spider are known to supplement their diet by occasionally preying on vertebrates.

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