



#230
21 March 2023

Common Sand Boa predation on a Common Myna

Common Sand Boa *Eryx conicus* is widely distributed in Pakistan, Nepal, India, and Sri Lanka (Uetz et al. 2020). This species is common throughout India, except in the north-east and Andaman & Nicobar Islands (Srinivasulu et al. 2014). This burrowing, semi-fossorial, nocturnal (occasionally found in the daytime) snake inhabits arid, semi-arid, deciduous forests, and agricultural fields in newly developed urban areas.

The Sand Boa is an ambush predator that hides below the sandy soil surface, keeping only its eyes and nostrils above the surface. When the prey comes close enough, the snake suddenly projects itself out of its hiding place and strikes and grabs the prey (Srinivasulu et al. 2014).



A large Common Sand Boa *Eryx conicus* with its prey as a Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*, Vadodara, Gujarat. © Vedant K. Upadhyay.



We noticed a similar ambush-predating behaviour of the species. On 16 July 2022, we saw an individual of *E. conicus* trying to engulf a Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* on an open plot of land (22.2966° & 73.1385°) near the residential area of Vasna, is a newly developed area of the urban city of Vadodara, Gujarat, India. We noticed an adult Common Sand Boa catching a common myna in the undergrowth of vegetation, when we heard a stress calls of a bird. The Boa was able to disappear into dense bushes with its prey bird. Therefore, we cannot observe whether it swallows the Myna or not, but such observation shows the Boa is a master of catching a small number of birds.

The published literature shows *E. conicus* feeds mainly on lizards, rodents, frogs, small mammals, and birds, like Myna, Hoopoe, babblers, and quails (Daniel 2002; Whitaker & Captain 2004). Recent literature shows the species also feed Bengal Monitor *Varanus bengalensis* (Bhardwaj 2018) and Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis* (Jadav et al. 2022). Earlier, similar observations as Common Sand Boa feeding on myna were noticed by Maurya (2020: <https://www.indianreptiles.org/#!/sp/176/Eryx-conicus>) and Singh (2021: <https://www.wealthywaste.com/rough-scaled-sand-boa-gongylophis-conicus>) at Saket Metro station, Dehli and the Keoladeo Ghana National Park at Rajasthan was trying to ingest a bird (Mynah) during the daytime as boa was predated on a Common Myna, respectively.

This Boidae species *E. conicus* is categorized as 'Near Threatened' under IUCN Red List due to tread and extensive habitat loss (Srinivasulu et

al. 2021). The present observation shows the species surviving in newly developed, highly populated areas of Vadodara city. It is the second photographic record of the species preying on Myna bird.

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Citation: Upadhyay, V.K., R. Vyas & K. Upadhyay (2023). Common Sand Boa predation on a Common Myna. *Reptile Rap* #230, In: *Zoo's Print* 38(3): 01–02.