

## Saw-scaled Viper with ocular damage in Valsad, Gujarat

Echis carinatus (Schneider, 1801) commonly called the Saw-scaled Viper is found throughout India except West Bengal and the northeast (Whitaker & Captain 2004), and reaches the lower Himalayan region (Ananjeva et al. 2021). It has a relatively small and short, wide, pearshaped head distinct from the neck. The body is moderately slender and cylindrical, the dorsal scales are mostly keeled. However, the scales on the lower flanks stick out at a distinct 45° angle and have a central ridge, or keel, that is serrated, the tail is short and the subcaudals are single (Mallow et al. 2003). The species possesses a rounded snout and large independently evolved image-forming eyes in over 40 lineages (Salvini-Plawen &



Saw-scaled Viper *Echis carinatu*, a – detailed view with damaged left eye | b –normal right eye | c – distant full image from Pandev Hill Station (20.5028 N, 73.3238 E) Valsad, Gujarat, India. © Aadit Patel.



Mayr 1977), optimizing prey recognition through olfactory and chemical senses. However, eye damage poses a survival threat as they've adapted from nocturnal to colour vision for enhanced light capture in low-light conditions (Simões et al. 2016).

At about 1800 h on 12 March 2022 in Pandev Hill Station, Valsad (20.5028 N,73.3238 E), Gujarat, India, while crossing the natural trails we observed a Saw-scaled Viper approximately 23 cm in length, upon much closer observation we noticed that it had a damaged left eye. Above the amputated eyeball the dried optical veins could be seen clearly with a damaged pupil. The exact reason for this is however unknown, and this is an interesting documentation of a reptilian species demonstrating its survival instinct in the wild and being able to find its prey. Previously, similar instances in other snake species have been reported (Patel et al. 2022).

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## Aadit Patel<sup>1</sup>, Aurobindo Samal<sup>2</sup> & Shreya Pandey<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Valsad Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (VSPCA), Valsad, Gujarat 396375, India.

<sup>2</sup> Earth Crusaders Organisation (ECO), Bhubaneswar, Odisha 751019, India.

<sup>3</sup> Ecology and Genetics Research unit, University of Oulu 90014, Finland.

Emails: <sup>1</sup>patelaadit1march@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>aurobindo. cse@gmail.com, <sup>3</sup>shreya.pandey@oulu.fi (corresponding author)

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