



## A report on unusual diet of Checkered Keelback from Vadodara, Gujarat

*Fowlea piscator* (Schneider, 1799), commonly known as Checkered Keelback, is a non-venomous, medium-sized, oviparous natricine snake with keeled dorsal scales, distributed throughout much of southern Asia (Das & Das 2017). The species is widely distributed throughout India and is reported from almost all regions of the Gujarat State (Patel & Vyas 2019). This species mainly feeds on frogs and fish (Daniel 2002), but occasionally eats turtles (Gyawali 2019), rodents & birds (Whitaker & Captain 2004), and even arthropods (Wadeker 1963). Herein we report a case of bat predation by *F. piscator* in Gujarat, India.

On 11 October 2022 at 2230 h, we received a snake rescue call from a society located in Harni



The rescued individual of Checkered Keelback *Fowlea piscator* regurgitating a bat of genus *Pipistrellus* sp. and Common Indian Bullfrog (A & B). Regurgitated bat of the genus *Pipistrellus* (C). © Hemant Vadhavana.



Village of Vadodara, Gujarat, India (22.3408 N, 73.2254 E). The snake was lying under a marble slab in the open garden near a residence. We identified the snake as an adult *Fowlea piscator* (total length = 91.9 cm), with a dull olive ground colour and a moderate amount of black patterning (Whitaker & Captain 2004). After the rescue, the snake, regurgitated a bat, followed by a Common Indian Bullfrog *Hoplobatrachus tigerinus* (Daudin, 1803) after about 10 minutes from the time of rescue. Checkered Keelback tend to regurgitate due to stress during handling or to escape from a certain location (Raju Vyas pers. comm. 11 October 2023), during the rescue process. Because the bat was partially ruptured when the snake regurgitated, the identification of the bat was limited to the genus level. The bat was identified as a member of genus *Pipistrellus* by consulting available literature (Brosset 1962; Shah & Srinivasulu 2020) and then having the identity confirmed by experts. Pipistrels are insectivorous bats widely distributed in forest, rural, and urban areas of central Gujarat (Devkar & Upadhyay 2015).

In Nepal, there are a few instances of attempted predation and prey handling of fish by *Fowlea piscator* (Devkota et al. 2020). The snake appears to be an opportunistic predator and has been observed feeding on boiled rice and cooked chicken at the Jahangir University Campus in Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh (Moktadir & Hasan 2016). Bat predation by *Lycodon aulicus* (Common Wolf Snake) was also reported from Porbandar, Gujarat (Tank & Sharma 2016). Esberard & Vrcibradic (2007) reported multiple instances of snake predation of bats by

three different snake species in Brazil. Barti et al. (2019) reported cases of bat predation in underground habitats and highlighted the importance of snake predation on bats in the western Palaearctic. To our knowledge, the present report of bat predation by *Fowlea piscator* is the first occurrence of bat predation by the natricine snake species in wild and hence it is noteworthy.

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