



Notes on parturition of Bamboo Pit Viper in wild

Pit vipers are a group of venomous snakes that comprise several genera of vipers with a facial pit; they are terrestrial and arboreal in habit and predominantly found in wet, humid forests and montane habitats as well as in a few dry forest habitats in the Oriental realm (Mallik et al. 2021). Asian Pit Vipers belonging to the genus *Craspedocephalus* are a complex group of vipers, distributed in southern and southeastern Asia (Mallik et al. 2021). The Bamboo Pit Viper *Craspedocephalus gramineus* (Shaw, 1802), is the most widespread pit viper, found in most of the dense forests of peninsular India (Mallik et al. 2021).

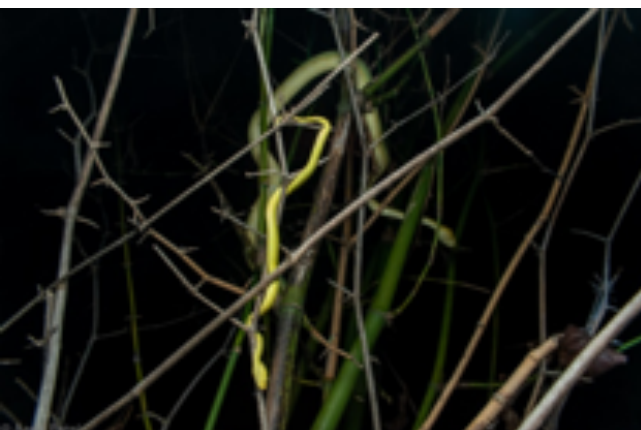
During a survey on 17 June 2022 in the forest of southern Gujarat 20.510° N, 73.276° E at around 2100 h, the first author observed a gravid Bamboo Pit Viper about 1 m above the ground coiled on fallen branches of a bamboo plant.

On closer observation, the author observed some movement in the belly of the Bamboo Pit Viper. It seemed like the neonates were fully developed and were about to emerge. After about 8–10 minutes the viper showed mild movements, it gently lifted the tail and started to move to push the juveniles out.

The first juvenile appeared being covered in mucosal fluids and making movement by opening its mouth and adjusting the jaws. It clung on to a nearby branch, rubbing its body against the branches to get rid of the mucosal fluids. After giving birth to the first neonate, the female again positioned itself giving birth to four neonates, after which it moved towards the bamboo where it gave birth to the rest.

During the process some neonates fell upon the litterfall while others swiftly clanged on to the branches. The female viper gave birth to thirteen juveniles within two hours, aligning with the reproductive traits commonly found in vipers, showcasing their strategy of giving birth to multiple offsprings to enhance survival rates.

This observation provides valuable insights into the reproductive behaviour of the species and highlights its adaptability in selecting a suitable environment for neonate survival. The neonates' behaviour suggests an innate capability to adapt to their surroundings immediately after birth. This documentation underscores the importance of protecting the woodlands and maintaining their ecological integrity, as these habitats are critical for the species survival.



Observation of Bamboo Pit Viper *Carspedocephalus gramineus* giving birth in the Wild. ©Aadit Patel.



This also reinforces the need for further field studies to document similar behaviours and their ecological implications, in the context of conservation efforts in the Western and Eastern Ghats of India.

References

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Aadit Patel¹, Shreya Pandey^{2*} & Aurobindo Samal³

¹Snake Research Institute, Office of the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Valsad (North) Division Valsad, Gujarat 396001, India.

patelaadit1march@gmail.com

²*Ecology and Genetics Research unit, University of Oulu 90014, Finland.

Email: shreya.pandey@oulu.fi (corresponding author)

³Earth Crusaders Organisation (ECO), Bhubaneswar, Odisha 751019, India.

Email: aurobindo.cse@gmail.com

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