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Report on Checkered Keelback, *Fowlea piscator* (Schneider, 1799) (Reptilia: Colubridae)

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ABSTRACT

Based on the common resident and availability of the common water-snake of Bangladesh (Fowlea piscator), it is urgent to know about this non-venomous colubrid snake. In aquatic or semi-aquatic habitats, this snake was found all the year-round. Due to its availability, it was possible to know their all sorts of activities with biting record. Its biting is shown as just several dots in a line. It has red and yellow color morph. Its biting is painful but completely non-fatal. Only cleanliness of the affected area by fresh-water is enough. Around human dwelling place, only cleanliness is the method for controlling them. Domestic animals such as geese, duck, fowl, Turkey fowl, cat, and dog can be reared as biological control of this snake. This snake eats large volume of frogs, toads, insects, and rats from our crop fields.

Keywords: Checkered Keelback, Availability, Reproduction, Non-Venomous Snake, Biological Control, Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

Checkered keelback snake is an endemic snake of Asia and it has no subspecies. It is completely non-venomous and belongs to the family Colubridae. This snake is considered as least concern (LC) both national and international affairs. In crop fields, this snake eats large number of rats, amphibians, and insects. Additionally, other large birds like eagles, vultures, hawks, and falcons eat this snake, so in the case of ecological balance, this snake has a great impact. These snakes exhibit aggressive behavior and sometimes bite but this is not fatal for human. It has total maximum 88 teeth (17 teeth on each side of maxilla, palatine 6, pterygoid 6-10, and dentary 18-19). In nature, its longevity is 3-10 years. This snake has a great impact in ecological chain. Its diploid chromosome number is 42. Habitat loss, pollution, wrongly killed as Russell's vipers are their possible threats. Juveniles feed primarily on tadpoles, frogs, and aquatic insects, whereas adults feed on fishes and frogs but occasionally take rodents and birds [1]. In rainy season of Bangladesh, lots of snakes are found everywhere [2]. It has a large population in the country and

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presumably stable at all [3]. The objective of this report is to focus this snake as a completely non-venomous snake in order to conserve.

Classification

Phylum:	Chordata
Subphylum:	Vertebrata
Class:	Reptilia
Order:	Squamata
Family:	Colubridae
Genus:	*Fowlea*
Species:	*piscator*
Scientific name:	*F. piscator* (Schneider, 1799)

Color morph and size

Newly hatched looks like the same olive color with black checks but yellowish and black stripe are more significant. Its actual color is olive brown or gray. In nature, it exhibits red and yellow morphs. Males are smaller than the females.

Breeding biology of checkered keelback

Mating is known to takes from October and females with eggs are found during November to May with gestation period of 55-67 days and lay 8-91 eggs [4]. Its breeding season from December to March in Bangladesh [5]. Incubation period is 37-51 days (Daniel, 2002), 60-70 days [6]. Hatchlings are 11 cm long on average. Eggs are variable in size with 1.5-4 cm and soft. Its total length is 150 cm [5].

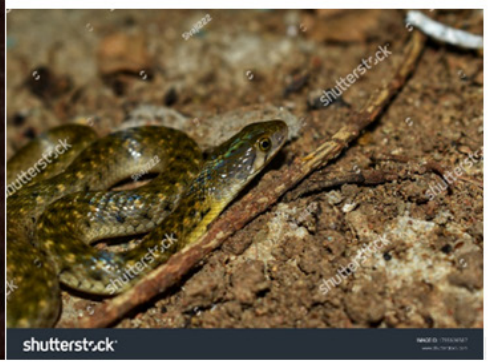
Biting mark

Due to its non-venomous teeth, all marks look like the same at the same line. It looks just a series of dots compared to other venomous snakes.

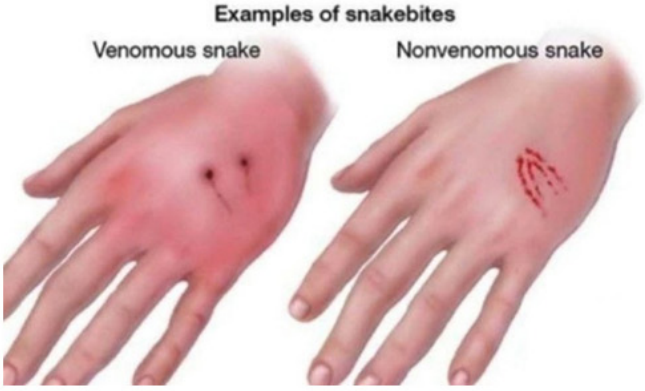
Male (Source: [7])

Female with eggs (Source: [8])

Hatchling



Juvenile



Biting area

Control measures

We have a great dearth of knowledge about snakes and the management after their biting [9]. Geese, duck, fowl, Turkey fowl, cat, and dogs are used for their biological control [10]. Cleanliness around dwelling area, minimize water source near habitat, physical barrier, planting roosting sites for attracting birds are major issues to control all sorts of snakes.

CONCLUSIONS

This checkered keelback is a common resident water-snake of Bangladesh. It has no fangs and few biting records. If they bite, just wash that area with normal water. Need to know the behavior and characteristics of this non-venomous snake. Only cleanliness of the dwelling area, it is possible to control them and minimize the unnecessary fear to this snake.

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