

tremendously thick and carries fifteen to twenty horny spikes which project backwards and slightly outwards from the main stem. I cannot appreciate its utility; as a weapon it is absurd, and as a boring instrument if it is true that the 'thub' burrows head first, it is at the wrong end of the machine.

My informants say that it gets its name from its never moving from the one place. It is found all over the Shamiyah Desert but only where stony outcrops occur and is not found at all in the Gizerah.

Its burrow descends vertically in a medium spiral to a depth of about four feet, a horizontal off-shoot near the surface in the female burrow containing the eggs. The burrows are occupied singly and have one outlet.

Unlike the *harwhal* the 'thub' eats vegetation but of no particular sort. It also eats crickets and it is generally averred that the female thub watches her eggs hatch not from maternal solicitude but in order to eat them.

They hibernate in December and January and are much sligher in February.

They breed in April and May. The female is said at this season to protrude her rear half from her burrow at the same time slowly waving her tail. This attracts passing males who signify their presence by hissing. Hunters often catch a female thub by approaching gently while she is thus employed and imitating the hiss of the male. The female leaves her hole and is then an easy capture. Coitus is by ventral apposition; the pair do not associate for a time longer than is necessary for the act. Most males are darkly coloured similar to the *harwhal* but there are some much lighter. All females are light.

The eggs which are white are thirty to forty in number and are compared in size and shape to small dates. They are laid in the female's burrow and as stated previously are hatched for the table. Whether she eats only a proportion or all that cannot escape is unknown. Both reptiles and eggs are eaten by the Arab.

They are not venomous, and ripe old age, longer than man, is said to be their destiny if they escape the desert hunters. The commonest method of catching them is to pour water down their holes when they promptly emerge.

Their throats and bellies distend when they hiss as in the *harwhals*.

NASIRIYAH,

NORMAN L. CORKILL.

IRAQ,

September 9, 1927.

#### XXVIII.—HAMADRYADS IN THE KUMAON TERA

I saw two hamadryads in my shooting block. Neither of them seriously showed much fight. The first one made off through jungle; I was within 10 yards of it when first seen.



The second was in my back verandah. I heard a curious swishing noise while having tea at 4.30 p.m. and on looking out of the window saw a huge hamadryad slowly moving along the back verandah. I called up the servants and we threatened it with sticks and it made off rapidly. We threw big stones and one caught it on the back, drawing blood. It reared up about 3 feet or more, expanding its hood, but did not drive home its attack and finally went up a bushy tree 15 feet off the ground. Meanwhile my man brought a shot-gun and I shot it through the head. It measured 13 feet.

I may say that I saw two hamadryads last year in a block in the Siwaliks and neither of them showed fight. One we killed, the other was lying beside a stream when I came on it in the early morning while out after a chital. It swam the stream like greased lightning and disappeared.

AJMER,  
*July 8, 1927.*

W. M. LOGAN HOME,  
*Major,*  
*4th Bombay Grenadiers.*

[While the belief that the Hamadryad will attack human beings with or without provocation is widely current, authentic records of its doing so are extremely rare. In the majority of instances this snake, like others of his kind, seeks safety in flight. Eds.]

#### XXIX.—MR. SLATER'S DEATH BY SNAKE BITE

Some months back you published in your Journal my letter regarding the above, in which I stated that it was a well-known fact in these parts that the snake which bit Mr. Slater of the Geological Department was a King Cobra or Hamadryad. I gave the facts as stated to me by the Range Forest Officer who was at that time in charge of the Thirthahalli Range in the Shimoga District where this incident took place. In a later issue of the Journal Mr. R. C. Morris of Attikan Estate, Mysore District, contradicted my statement, and said that it was not a King Cobra but a Russel's Viper which bit Mr. Slater and caused his death. I am sorry I was not able to reply to this contradiction earlier as I have only now been able to get authentic confirmation of my previous statement.

MYSORE, S. INDIA,  
*September 27, 1927.*

CHARLES THEOBALD.

[Mr. Theobald forwards us letters received by him from the District Magistrate, Shimoga, the Director, Mysore Geological Department, and the District Forest Officer, Shimoga. Though none of these officials were present at the time of the occurrence they conclude from the reports gathered at the time that the snake which caused Mr. Slater's death was a 'Kalinaga' which according to Mr. Theobald is the local name for Hamadryad. Eds.]



Home, W M L. 1928. "Hamadryads in the Kumaon Terai." *The journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 32, 610–611.

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