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# 18. STRANGE BEHAVIOUR IN THE RAT SNAKE *PTYAS MUCOSUS*, FAMILY COLUBRIDAE

We observed the following incident on July 20, 2001 between 1535 to 1550 hrs outside our office — the Conservation Education Centre, Bombay Natural History Society, Goregaon, Mumbai. An Oriental magpie-robin (*Copsychus saularis*) had laid four eggs in the battery box of a solar lamp post about three weeks earlier. The pale green eggs with reddish-brown spots were in a cup-shaped nest made of dry grass and twigs, resting in one corner of the battery box.

The eggs were intact and were being guarded regularly by the male and incubated by the female till the afternoon of July 20, 2001. We heard loud and harsh alarm calls by the robin at around 1525 hrs. Initially, we ignored it, as this behaviour is common for the robin when an intruder such as jungle babbler, squirrel or monitor lizard comes close to the nest.

This time, however, the calls were more intense and very loud. On looking at the lamp post, we saw a rat snake, *Ptyas mucosus* entering the battery box. As we went near to have a closer look, the snake slithered down, rushing towards

some bushes to hide. We immediately opened the battery box to see the status of the nest and found that only one egg was left. We thought that the game was over, as three eggs had been eaten by the rat snake, but after an interval of 5 minutes, the robin started making similar alarm calls at the same place. We rushed back and were surprised to see the rat snake in the battery box again! Out of curiosity we opened the battery box, and found that the snake had regurgitated the eggshells.

The fourth egg was left untouched by the snake.

January 18, 2002

PRITI SAWANT

ANURADHA RAJAGOPALAN\*

*Bombay Natural History Society,*

*Hornbill House, S.B. Singh Road,*

*Dr. Sálim Ali Chowk, Bombay 400 023,*

*Maharashtra, India.*

*\*Present Address: B/206, Haritara Apts.*

*B.T.Road, Mhatrewadi, Dahisar (W),*

*Mumbai 400 068, Maharashtra, India.*

# 19. FIRST RECORD OF BOULENGER'S TREE FROG *CHIRIXALUS VITTATUS* (ANURA: RHACOPHORIDAE) FROM MIZORAM, NORTHEAST INDIA

*Chirixalus vittatus* was described by Boulenger (1887) from Bhamo, Upper Burma as *Ixalus vittatus*. The species was reported from India by Romer (1949) who collected two gravid females on June 7, 1944 near Kohima (then in Assam State). Khare and Kiyasetuo (1986) subsequently reported the species from Kohima, Nagaland.

A single specimen was collected by

Samraat Pawar and Sayantan Biswas, from a breeding site found near Ngengpui Wildlife Sanctuary, Lunglei district (Lai Autonomous District Council), southern Mizoram, during a survey conducted by them in 1998. The female was near a gelatinous foam-nest on *Saccharum* grass, about 3 m tall, nearly 50 m from the Forest Rest House of the Ngengpui Wildlife Sanctuary. They found the species to be locally common in





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