

place where these arthropods take shelter during the winter, probably because it is better insulated than other parts of the nest, and is thus helpful for thermoregulation in these cold blooded animals. This 'site' is equally good for hatching of eggs also.

Spiders play an important role in biological control of insect pests, but many insect pests like the red cotton bug *Dysdercus cingulatus*, which infest many cultivated and wild plants, take shelter in baya nests during winter. When winter passes, these insects come out from their 'hides', multiply and start a fresh attack on agricultural crops. Thus, abandoned

nests of the baya are used by both useful and harmful arthropods.

I express my sincere thanks to Dr. B.K. Biswas, Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta, for identification of spiders, to Dr. Sushil Kumar, Entomologist, Forest Research Institute, Dehra Dun, for identification of the red cotton bug, and to Dr. Shiva Sharma, Dept. of Botany, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, for guidance and encouragement.

August 10, 1989 SATISH KUMAR SHARMA

20. SOME FOOD PLANTS OF THE STAR TORTOISE *GEOCHELONE ELEGANS* AT POINT CALIMERE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, TAMIL NADU

The star tortoise *Geochelone elegans* occurs in Point Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu, and is commonly seen during monsoon in the open grazing lands. It is mostly crepuscular and omnivorous, but inclined to be vegetarian (THE BOOK OF INDIAN REPTILES, Daniel, J.C. 1983). During our field trips for the BNHS project at Point Calimere, whenever a star tortoise was encountered it was followed and a record of the plants eaten by the tortoise was maintained from 1987. Altogether seven food plants were identified and are listed in Table 1.

According to THE BOOK OF INDIAN REPTILES they feed on succulents such as *Cissus quadrangularis*, fallen fruits, grasses and similar vegetation. The food plants mentioned here give more precise data on the food plants of this tortoise.

TABLE I

FOOD PLANTS OF STAR TORTOISE AT PT. CALIMERE

Species	Family	Part eaten
<i>Alysicarpus monilifer</i>	Papilionaceae	Leaves
<i>Alysicarpus vaginalis</i>	Papilionaceae	Leaves
<i>Cyperus</i> sp.	Cyperaceae	Leaves
<i>Dactyloctenium aegyptium</i>	Gramineae	Leaves
<i>Euphorbia hirta</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaves
<i>Ipomoea pescaprae</i>	Convolvulaceae	Flowers
<i>Pentatropis capensis</i>	Asclepiadaceae	Leaves

S. ALAGAR RAJAN

November 26, 1990 P. BALASUBRAMANIAN

21. CANNIBALISM BY COMMON GARDEN LIZARD *CALOTES VERSICOLOR*

On 11 November 1990, at about 1100 hrs, I observed an adult common garden lizard *Calotes versicolor* on a thatched roof in the World Forestry Arboretum, Jaipur. The lizard was involved in a tussle with a subadult of its own species. Soon one more adult lizard appeared from nearby and tried to snatch the subadult from its competitor, but the first adult lizard immediately picked up the subadult in its mouth and rushed to a safer place, hardly five metres from the previous spot. It then started swallowing the unfortunate subadult head first, taking approximately eight minutes to

complete the whole process of swallowing.

When it had completed swallowing, it was captured. It measured about 330 mm in length. The cannibalistic lizard was then imprisoned in a cage made of fine mesh to study its digestive capacity. Unfortunately on 14 November at about 0815 hrs it was freed by one of our labourers unknowingly. The empty cage was scrutinised and three excreta pellets were found in it giving an indication of the slow digestion of the prey.

The food habits of the common garden lizard have been described in THE BOOK OF INDIAN REPTILES



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