

No. XIII.—THE FOOD OF PYTHONS.

I send herewith particulars given me by Mr. Ralph, the Executive Engineer, P. W. D., of this District, as they may prove of interest to some of our readers.

On the 19th December 1906, at about 6 p.m., news was brought to Mr. Ralph and Mr. Debrulais (Assistant Engineer, Bengal Duars Railway) that a huge python (*Python molurus*) was lying in the Tondoo Forest between the Murti and Saldacca Rivers (Nagrakhatha Sub-district).

As the snake was reported to be only about 150 yards from the railway line, the two went off at once duly armed, but on their arrival, they found the snake absolutely comatose, and it was killed with sticks. It was very distended and they decided to see what it had been feeding on. It was opened and found to contain a leopard measuring 4 feet 2 inches from nose to rump. The tail came off when removing the body and was too decomposed to be accurately measured. The panther had been swallowed head first, with its forearms stretched out in front of its head.

On the snake were found seven hind-claw cuts, the first about 3 feet from the head, the last about 1 foot from the tail.

The python was 18 feet in length and the span of the skin, after removal of the leopard, was 22 inches.

ARUNDEL BEGBIE, MAJOR

(13th Rajputs).

BAKSA DUAR, 14th January 1907.

No. XIV.—BATS FEEDING ON SMALL BIRDS.

For the past three years I have been puzzled to know whether my surmise that the Indian Vampire Bat (*Megaderma lyra*) was responsible for the remains of several kinds of small birds, chiefly of the Indian Bush Chat (*Pratincola maura*), small bats and insects, which are always to be picked up from the floor of my front verandah every morning in the cold weather, and which is at times quite strewn with them.

At first I suspected the culprits might be either rats or owlets (*Athene brama*), which occupied a leaf shed close to the bungalow but were killed on account of the unpleasant noise they made. I had frequently scared this bat off specimens of birds that were hung up preparatory to skinning in the morning, but not before they had damaged the breast and abdomen.

To-night, however, I have been able to confirm the fact that undoubtedly small birds do form a portion, and here a substantial one, of *M. lyra's* food, having just killed one in the act of eating a small bird, and the bat and its victim lie before me as I write. On going into my office, which opens into the verandah, to get some note paper, I heard something drop and saw three of these bats flying round the room. Picking up a stick I knocked one down and



Begbie, A. 1907. "The food of pythons." *The journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 17, 1021–1021.

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