

No. XXIII.—THE LAPWING OR PEEWIT
(*VANELLUS VULGARIS*).

I see in Blandford that the Peewit has not been recorded further east than Oudh ; it may be interesting therefore to note, that last cold weather it was fairly plentiful along the banks of the Upper Chindwin and in swampy ground in the same locality. To make certain one was shot on the 12th December 1903 and skinned for identification.

H. H. HARRINGTON, CAPTAIN.

MONYWA, 17th April, 1904.

No. XXIV.—MELANISM AMONGST PANTHERS.

I do not know if the information is of any value beyond being corroborative, but on 20th March, some forest employés working in the forests near Hopin in the Bhamo District of Upper Burma came upon a black female leopard with cubs in a large hollow tree. They returned to camp and came out with an elephant, which scared the mother leopard and she bolted. The men were then able to secure the cubs, one of which was black, while the other was the ordinary spotted yellow kind. The latter died, but the black one is alive and doing well, and I propose to take him home next month for the London Zoo. This seems to make it perfectly clear that the black leopard is only a freak.

The cub I now have has a number of solitary white hairs all over the body and legs, and the whiskers are pure white. In certain lights the ordinary leopard spots can be distinctly seen, being jet black on a muddy black fur. I hope to watch the development of colour.

T. A. HAUXWELL,
Conservator of Forests.

MAYMYO, BURMA, 21st April, 1904.

No. XXV.—PAPILIO MACHAON IN BALUCHISTAN.

I saw, a few days ago, on a hill about midway between Quetta and Nushki, a fine Papilio, which I am certain was *machaon*. It was a perfectly fresh specimen, but seemed to be of a more greenish tint than those I have seen in England and the Himalayas. I watched it for some time, and almost succeeded in capturing it with my fingers. I do not know whether this species has previously been recorded from Baluchistan, but I have been over two years in the neighbourhood of Quetta, and never before saw any Papilio here, so perhaps it may be worth recording.

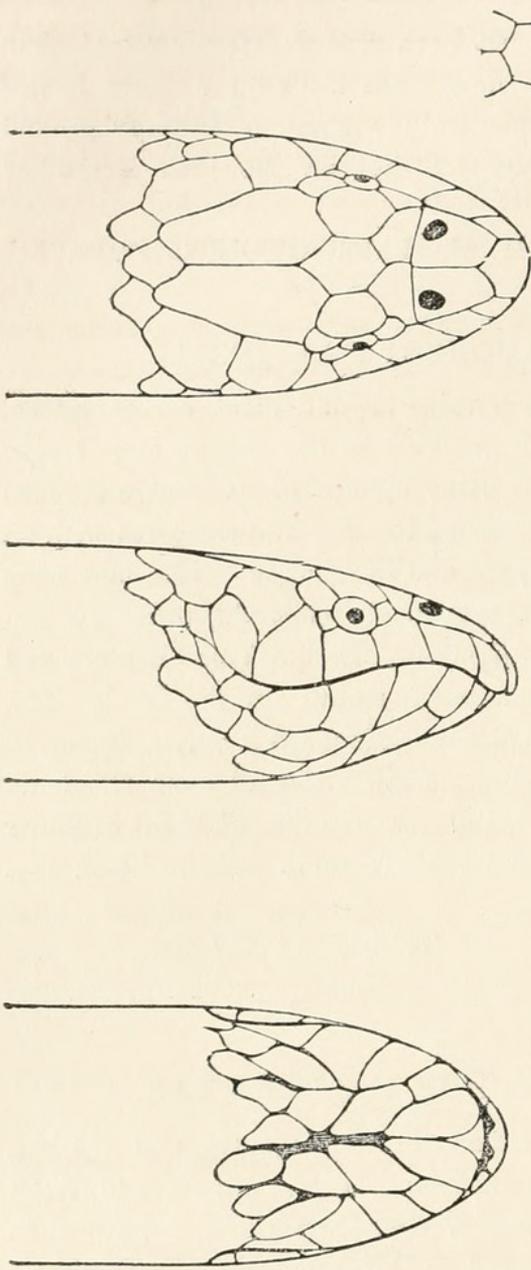
C. G. NURSE, MAJOR,
113th Infantry.

QUETTA, May, 1904.

No. XXVI.—OCCURRENCE OF A RARE SEA SNAKE (*DISTIRA GILLESPIÆ*) ON THE MALABAR COAST.

In the Bombay Natural History Society's Journal Vol. XII, page 642, Mr. G. A. Boulenger described and figured a new sea snake caught in the

Kurrachee harbour which he called *Distira Gillespiei*.



Distira Gillespiei.

On the 5th March this year I had a specimen of this evidently rare snake brought me by a fisherman I employ to collect for me in Cannanore. When questioned he doubted whether he had ever seen a similar snake before. My specimen almost exactly accords with Mr. Boulenger's description, and plate, but as the snake is so rare, and there appear to me some additional points worthy of mention, perhaps a repetition of the characters on my own lines may be of interest.

The snake, a male, measures 4 feet $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches, of which the tail accounts for $4\frac{5}{8}$ inches. It was brought alive and unscathed in a chatty, and proved to be remarkably active and strong, freeing itself repeatedly from the grasp of my long metal tongs. Removed from its native element the forepart of the body is freely and actively mobile, but progression is almost nullified by the weight and conformation of its hinder parts.

General Characters.—The head is of the same calibre as the anterior part of the body. The snout projects well over the chin. The eye is small, situated laterally, with a slight inclination upwards, and the iris during life was too dark to per-

mit of the shape of the pupil being investigated. After immersion in spirit the pupil is seen to be round. The commissure of the mouth is peculiar viewed in profile, resembling an italic *f* with the curves exaggerated, and the anterior convex upwards. The neck shows no constriction behind the head. The body is cylindrical and of nearly uniform calibre in about its anterior half, when it rapidly increases, acquiring a markedly compressed character and heavy form, the depth of the snake at its greatest girth being about four times that in its anterior part. The tail as in other hydrophides is markedly flattened from side to side (compressed).

Color.—Head blackish above, merging to yellowish laterally. Chin (except at tip which is blackish) and throat yellowish. Body anteriorly lemon-yellow with black dorsal rhomboids confluent by their angles vertebally. Black similarly shaped marks on belly, confluent by their angles, form a ventral streak. Posteriorly olive greenish black dorsally with obscure transverse darker bars, merging to pale lemon in the flanks. The ventral black line is continued to vent and after this is most conspicuous at the lower border and tip of tail. Anteriorly the colors are bright, and glistening; posteriorly pale, and dull.

Scale Characters. Rostral.—Height in median line very slightly exceeds the breadth. Lower border with central lobulus as in other sea snakes in contact with 4 shields, of which the 1st supralabial sutures are rather larger than the nasal.

Nasals.—Large, contiguous, in contact with the 1st and 2nd supralabials, (and 3rd also on right side). Length 3 times the suture between the præfrontals. Nostrils situated in postero-external part of shield with no suture running to shield margin.

Præfrontals.—Small. In contact with nasal, præocular, supraocular, and frontal (and 3rd supralabial on right side).

Frontal.—Small. Length less than distance to rostral; subequal to supraoculars; rather greater than half the parietals. Breadth. Subequal to supraocular. In contact with 6 shields, of which the parietal sutures are longest, and the præfrontal smallest.

Parietals.—Rather narrow. *Supralabials* 7. All well developed; the 3rd and 4th touching the eye; 5th largest.

Præoculars.—One; smaller than the eye.

Postoculars.—Two; the lower very small.

Temporals.—One, large, in contact with the 5th and 6th supralabials, and succeeded by a rather larger shield touching the parietals.

Sublinguals.—Two well developed, subequal pairs, the fellows of each in contact with one another.

Infralabials.—6. Well developed, the first 4 touch the sublinguals. The first are large, in contact with one another forming a suture larger than that between the anterior sublingual fellows. The 4th is the largest of the series and constitutes the pentagonal; it is fully once and a third as broad as the posterior sublinguals, and is in contact with two scales behind.

Scales.—Anterior (*i.e.*, two heads lengths behind the head) 21 rows, glossy, smooth, and very distinctly imbricate, about as long as broad, subequal, or those of last row very slightly largest. Midbody (not including tail) 35-37 rows, not glossy, hexagonal, juxtaposed, bi or trituberculate, those of lowest rows plurituberculate, and larger than those of vertebral rows. Posterior (*i.e.*, two heads lengths in front of vent) 35-39 rows, with characters as in midbody.

Supracaudals.—Midtail 14 on each side, with 1 above and 1 below. A shield at tip of tail about twice the size of adjacent scales.

Ventrals 377. Anterior, well developed, smooth, entire, and nearly twice the breadth of adjacent rows. Midbody—Bi and trituberculate; many divided. Posterior—Bi and trituberculately, mostly divided. *Anal* 7 fd, small.

F. WALL, C.M.Z.S.,
Captain, I.M.S.

CANNANORE, 1st May, 1904.

No. XXVII.—THE EGGS OF THE SMALL SUN-BIRD
(*ARACHNECTHRA MINIMA*).

In the last number of the Society's Journal, page 473, there is a most interesting article on the birds of Travancore, by Mr. H. S. Fergusson. In it I notice he refers to Mr. Bourdillon's notes as to the eggs of *Arachnecthra minima* being minateurs of those of *Arach. asiatica*.

Now this has been stated before in Oates's "Nests and Eggs" with regard to nests taken on the Nilgherries. I wish Mr. Fergusson had mentioned if he had personally ever come across such eggs, as it is evident either a mistake having been once made about this bird it is again and again repeated, or that the bird lays in different places totally different eggs. In Kanara and about Matheran near Bombay the bird is very common, but breeds early in the year, generally in December and January, and I must have examined forty or fifty of their nests. In no one of these could the eggs or nests have been mistaken for either *zeylonica* or *asiatica*.

The nests of *minima* I have always found made of bright green moss ornamented with broad bands of white material, suspended in nine cases out of ten at about three feet from the ground on the edge of a plant of *Strobilanthus*. They were much smaller than the brown fibre-built nests of the two larger honey-suckers.

The eggs, of which I must have seen fifty, were all similar. They were considerably smaller, and more blunt than *asiatica*, and instead of being greenish-white, thickly spotted with greenish-brown, were clear white, minutely spotted, on the larger end with purple, forming a well-defined zone round the larger end. I hope Mr. Bourdillon if still in Travancore, or Mr. Fergusson, will be able to clear up the matter.

J. DAVIDSON.

EDINBURGH, 25th April 1904.

No. XXVIII.—OCCURRENCE OF THE CEYLON WHITE-EYE
(*ZOSTEROPS CEYLONENSIS*) IN THE NILGHERRIES.

It may be worth recording that on the 5th June 1903 I shot a specimen of the Ceylon White-Eye (*Zosterops Ceylonensis*) at Coonoor, in the Nilgherries, and that several birds, of this species, were observed by me at the time.

D. G. HATCHWELL.

MADRAS, 15th May, 1904.



Wall, Frank. 1904. "Occurrence of a Rare Sea Snake (*Distira gtilispice*) on the Malabar Coast." *The journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 15, 723–726.

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