



Cannibalism in *Ophisops microlepis* (Lacertidae) in Rajasthan, India

Ophisops microlepis (Blanford, 1870), the Cutch snake-eyed lacerta (Fig. 1), is a common and widely distributed lacertid in the states of Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan of western and central India (Sharma, 2002). It is a fairly large diurnal lacertid having a SVL of 65 mm and a tail length of 145 mm.



Figure 1: Adult *Ophisops microlepis* in its natural microhabitat

Here we present the first occurrence of cannibalism in the lizard *Ophisops microlepis* from the foothills of Central Aravalli, Ajmer, Rajasthan, India. Seven individuals of *Ophisops microlepis* were collected in September 2013 during our regular surveys for the assessment of morphometric parameters and population abundance. All the individuals were kept in different jars after capture. While preparing the morphometric records we observed an individual with a swollen abdomen that subsequently regurgitated a partially-digested lizard inside the jar. The regurgitated lizard was identified as a juvenile *Ophisops microlepis*.

The diet of *Ophisops microlepis* is composed mainly of various arthroporous insects, termites, and beetles of the Staphylinidae and other families, flies of the family Muscidae, earwigs,

bugs, and grubs of beetles, spiders and isopods (crustaceans). It is a strong predator of termites in Rajasthan (Smith, 1935; Tikader & Sharma, 1992; Sharma, 2002). There is no previous documentation of cannibalism in this species.



Figure 2: Partially digested juvenile *Ophisops microlepis* regurgitated by the adult

Literature cited

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