

AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES
OF
NEPAL

Biology, Systematics, Field Guide

By

H. Hermann Schleich & Werner Kästle (eds.)



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Elachistodon westermanni REINHARDT, 1863

by INDRANEIL DAS

Pl. 89/267

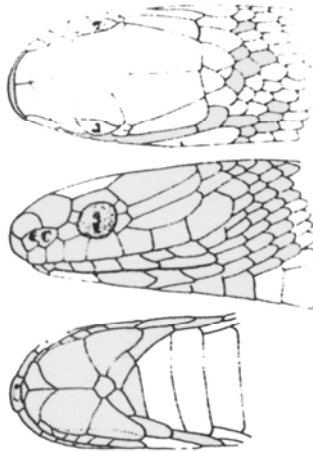


Fig. 1. Head pholidosis.

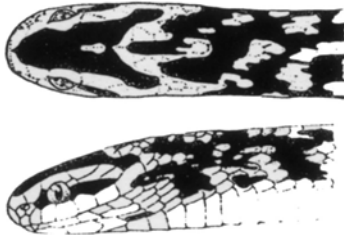


Fig. 2. Head and forebody pattern.

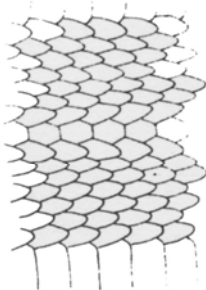


Fig. 3. Dorsal scalation.

Etymology: Gr. elachistos: the worst; odous: tooth. The dentition is very weak. Bernd Wilhelm (William) Westermann was the collector of the holotype of the species.

Synonyms: None

E: Indian egg-eating snake

G: Indische Eierschlange

N: Bharati andakhane sap

B: Dimkhor shap

Identification

General characteristics: A small snake; head distinct from neck; body elongate, laterally compressed and oval in cross-section; tail short; vertebral scales enlarged, hexagonal; all lateral rows with scales of equal size; nostril between two nasals; posterior part of nasal with a large pit (fig. 1); a single row of gulars; mental groove absent; ventrals, gulars and sublinguals closely connected. Large eyes with vertically elliptic pupils. Only few teeth, most of them tiny. Colour olive with black spots and light stripes.

The Indian egg-eating snake is thought to be closely related to the African egg-eating snakes with similar enlargements on the throat vertebrae serving to break the eggshells after being swallowed.

Measurements: Maximum 80.0 cm, tail 13.0 cm. A female of 78.4 cm total body length had a SVL of 67.0 cm.

Pholidosis: preocular single; postoculars two; supralabials six to seven (3rd and 4th in subocular position); nasal scale large, with a pit in its posterior part for which thermosensory function is supposed (fig. 1, centre). Frontal large, longer than its distance from the end of the snout. 1 preocular; 2 postoculars; 2 long anterior temporals; 6-7 supralabials 3rd and 4th touching the eye, two pairs of postmentals.

- Midbody scale rows 19 : 15 (rarely 16) : 15. Dorsal scales smooth, vertebral scales slightly enlarged and hexagonal (fig. 3).

- Ventrals 208-217, subcaudals 59-65 (paired); anal single;

Coloration (fig. 2): Dark olive-brown with black spots, to blackish above; the vertebrals yellowish-white, except at the outer edges which may be black, forming a light vertebral stripe that run all along the body. The sides are spotted or flecked with black and white, the belly whitish, although the outer margins of the ventrals are edged with brown. Yellow stripes run along the top of the head, above and below the eyes. An angular spot or bar on the nape. One specimen had a red spot on the head; lips yellow.