



Research

Note



Note on the clutch size and egg morphometry of *Oligodon albocinctus* and *Hebius xenura* (Reptilia: Serpentes: Colubridae)

Samuel Lalronunga^{1,2*}, Lalkhawngaiha Sailo², Vanlalchhuanga³, H. Lalmuanpuia⁴, Isaac Zosangliana⁵, Ngurthanmawia⁶, Nicky Malsawmtluanga⁷, Malsawmdawngliana², J. Ramdinmawia⁸, Lalmuanpuia², Zodinliana Fanai², C. Lalremtluanga⁹

¹Department of Zoology, Pachhunga University College, Aizawl 796001, Mizoram, India.

²Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Network, Mission Veng, Aizawl 796001, Mizoram, India

³Ramthar North, ⁵Electric Veng, ⁶Thakthing Veng, ⁷Chhing Veng, Aizawl 796001, Mizoram, India

⁴Arpu Veng, Sihphir 796036, Mizoram, India

⁸Ramhlun Vengthar, ⁹Mission Vengthlang, Aizawl 796012, Mizoram, India

We report the clutch size, egg morphometry and timing of oviposition in two snakes, *Oligodon albocinctus* and *Hebius xenura* based on specimens from Mizoram, northeast India.

Key words: clutch size, breeding, Mizoram, oviposition.

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*For correspondence ✉:
samuellrna@gmail.com

Contact us ✉:
sciencevision@outlook.com

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The light-barred kukri snake, *Oligodon albocinctus* (Cantor, 1839) is distributed in eastern and north-eastern India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Myanmar.¹ *Oligodon albocinctus* is characterized by having brownish-red dorsum with black-edged white, yellow or fawn (19–27 on body and 4–8 on tail) cross-bars; V-shaped yellow or cream mark on forehead. Even though the snake is common in its distribution range, only single report exist on the clutch size.² Wall's keelback, *Hebius xenura* (Wall, 1907) is a rare snake distributed from Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram in northeast India to Sagaing and Rakhine in Myanmar.¹ The species is characterized by having olive-brown to nearly

black dorsum with paired series of reddish-orange, pale brown, yellow or white spots on flanks; and markedly differs from all other species of the genus from this region in having an entire sub-caudal scales. The species is known to lay eggs,³ but apart from this, little is known about its breeding biology and clutch size.¹ Herein we report the clutch size, egg morphometry and timing of oviposition in *O. albocinctus* and *H. xenura* specimens from Mizoram, northeast India.

On 20 September 2017, we received an adult female *O. albocinctus* (410 mm SVL) that had been collected on 15 September 2017 from a residential area in Lunglei, Mizoram. On 21 September



Figure 1 | Eggs of *Oligodon albocinctus* from Mizoram.

2017 at ca. 0930 h we found a clutch containing 5 eggs in the terrarium. After the length and width of the eggs were measured, they were removed from the terrarium for incubation and the snake was released in the wild. The eggs were white, nonadherent, elliptical and elongated, about three times longer than broad (**Fig. 1**). The height of the eggs ranged from 39.1–45.8 mm (mean = 42.0 mm) and the diameter ranged from 14.0–14.9 mm (mean = 14.5 mm). The reported clutch size of *O. albocinctus* is 3, which is based on a dead gravid specimen examined by Wall², and this record is followed by subsequent authors.^{1,3-5} The present record on the clutch size of *O. albocinctus* from Mizoram is higher than previously recorded.

On 9 August 2017, a female *H. xenura* (570 mm SVL) was collected from a residential area in Aizawl, Mizoram and was kept in a terrarium prior to its release in the wild. Upon closer examination, it was found to be gravid. Five days post capture, it deposited 2 eggs. After the length and width of the eggs were measured, they were removed from the terrarium for incubation and the snake was released in the wild there after. The eggs were white, nonadherent, elliptical and elongated, about two times longer than broad. The height of the eggs ranged from 26.9–29.2 mm (mean = 28.5 mm) and the diameter ranged

from 12.3–12.6 mm (mean = 12.5 mm). The present observation adds valuable information on the natural history of the species.

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