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Cover: Life and death in one night - wolf hunting the hare. Mixed media—gouache, acrylics, pen & colour pencils. © Dupati Poojitha.



First photographic documentation of avian egg predation by Common Palm Civet *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus* (Pallas, 1777) (Mammalia: Carnivora: Viverridae)

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An avifaunal survey was conducted in August 2024 as part of a biodiversity monitoring program inside Pondicherry University campus. This campus is located at the Coromandel coast of southern India and covers an area of 3.15 km² (Parthasarathy et al. 2010). On 1 August 2024 at 17.20 h, we found a nest with two eggs in the hollow of a fallen dead tree about 1 m off the ground next to a drainage pond located at 12.024536°N, 79.848332°E (Image 1). Nesting materials included dead twigs and leaves, leaf litter, *Acacia* seed pods and snake skin shed.

We installed a Cuddeback Blue Series camera trap model 1279 equipped with an IR flash on 2 August 2024 around 18.00 h to monitor the nest. The camera trap was set to time-lapse mode to take an image every five minutes, five burst images and a video of 30 seconds duration whenever the motion sensor was triggered.

When retrieving the camera trap on 4 August 2024, we found the nest destroyed without any sign of the eggs nearby. The camera trap images showed

that the nest belonged to an Indian Robin *Copsychus fulicatus*. The camera trap recorded a Common Palm Civet *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus* predating the nest on 3 August 2024 at 23.23 h. When it found the nest, it climbed onto the tree (Image 2), took out the eggs and destroyed the nest in the process. Then it climbed down the tree log and consumed the eggs (Image 3) including egg shells within 2–3 minutes. The Indian Robin was recorded close by the destroyed nest on 4 August 2024 (Image 4).

Our records present the first photographic evidence in India of Indian Robin egg consumption by a Common Palm Civet. To date, documented predation events of the Common Palm Civet on bird nests include two reports from Thailand; in Khao Yai National Park, it preyed on nestlings in one of 87 recorded predation events (Pierce & Pobprasert 2013). In Phuluang Non-hunting Area, it also preyed on nestlings in three of 179 total predation events (Khamcha et al. 2018). In India, it was documented preying on Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura*

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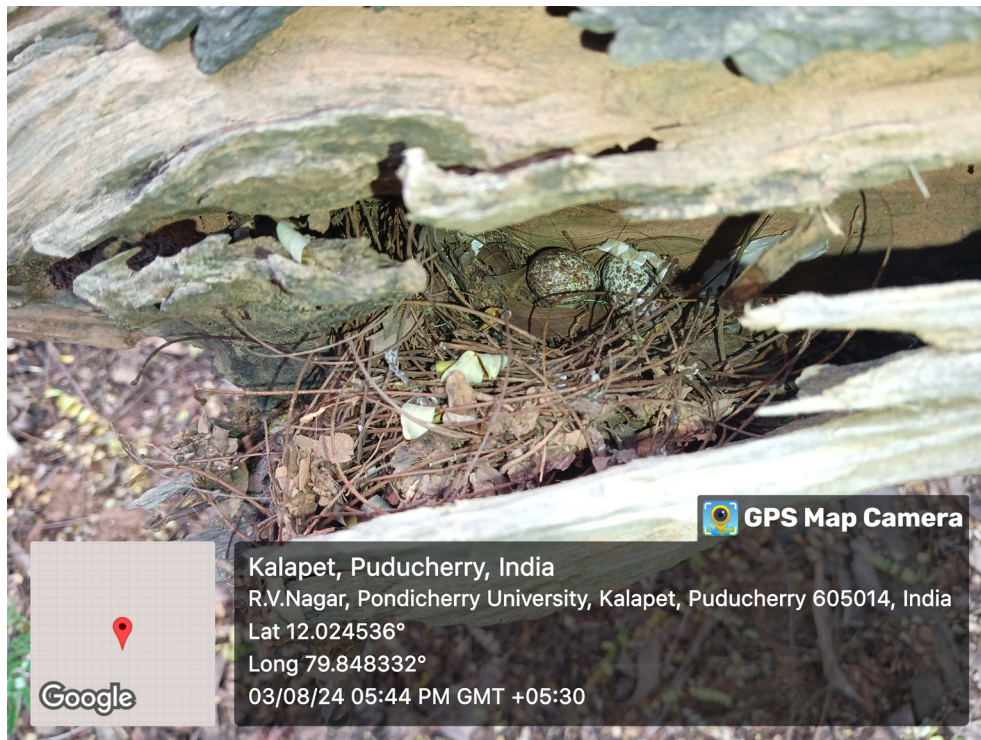


Image 1. Geo-tagged image of the Indian Robin nest with the eggs. © AVANI – PU Nature Club.



Image 2. Common Palm Civet *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus* climbing on to the fallen tree to inspect the nest on 3 August 2024. © AVANI – PU Nature Club.



Image 3. Common Palm Civet *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus* in the process of consuming the eggs. © AVANI – PU Nature Club.

nestlings in Gujarat (Solanki et al. 2018) and with a Red-billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa erythrorhynchos* kill in Valmiki Tiger Reserve, Bihar (Maurya et al. 2017). Interview respondents in Malaysia claimed that the Common Palm Civet frequently attacks poultry chicks and consumes poultry eggs (Hasan & Csányi 2023).

The Common Palm Civet's diet has been described as predominantly frugivorous including but not limited

to fruits and seeds of *Gnetum scadens*, Sacred Fig *Ficus religiosa*, Papaya *Carica papaya*, Common Jack *Artocarpus heterophyllus*, Wild Jack *A. hirsutus*, Fishtail Palm *Caryota urens*, Sugar-apple *Annona squamosa*, and Wild Himalayan Pear *Pyrus pashia* (Su & Sale 2007; Jothish 2011; Khan et al. 2019; Akrim et al. 2023). Vertebrate remains identified in scat samples indicate that it occasionally also consumes rodents, Indian Hare



Image 4. Indian Robin *Copsychus fulicatus* looking at the predated nest on 4 August. © AVANI – PU Nature Club.

Lepus nigricollis, and invertebrates like snails and insects (Khan et al. 2019; Akrim et al. 2023). In Simlipal Tiger Reserve, it was observed feeding on termite alates (Rathore et al. 2024).

Our camera trap images provide further insights into the diet of the Common Palm Civet and exemplify the benefit of using camera traps in avifaunal surveys.

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