

PESTICIDES AND FROGS

Dr. P. Mohanty Hejmadi who set up the amphibian research laboratory in Bhubaneswar, Orissa and Dr. Sushil Kumar Dutta have demonstrated that the stages of the economically important bull frog Rana tigrina are adversely affected by pesticides and fertilizers used in their habitat (agricultural areas). Dr. Hejmadi has opposed a move in the Lok Sabha for a ban on frog catching because she feels that this will not replace frogs in depleted areas as long as pesticides are used. She feels that frog culture/and selective release of juvenile frogs is the answer.

This approach is hard to understand in the context of the fact that millions of bull frogs are chopped up every year by the frog-leg industry for export. Apart from the crime of protein export from India the ecological implications have not been studied.

HERPETOLOGICAL BOOKS

Herp. books are available from Steven Weinkselbaum, Herp. Search Service, 117 East Santa Barbara Road, Lindenhurst, New York 11757. This is a good contact for Indian students of herpetology as there are now no foreign exchange restrictions on publications.

WWF SEA TURTLE HATCHERY

The World Wildlife Fund-India, Tamil Nadu Branch hatchery for sea turtle eggs is located at Injambakkam village, south of Madras in the Grindlay Bank rest house compound. Some 20 volunteers have been involved in the project, organized by Anne Joseph. 44 Olive Ridleys nests were collected and re-buried in the hatchery. Eggs were also bought from commercial collectors at 5 paise each. There were unpleasant confrontations with poachers after which volunteers were accompanied by Forest Department guards.

SNAKEBITE

J. Vijaya met Dr. Haripada Mallick of Janka, Midnapore District, West Bengal on 15th September '81. He has examined snakebite victims since he was first posted at Janka 40 years ago; around 200-300 victims come to his clinic every year. Snakes responsible are the spectacled cobra, monocled cobra, banded krait, common krait and Russell's viper, in that order.

In 1980 there were 3 deaths and one in 1981 (upto September). On 13 September a 12 year old boy was bitten by a 6 ft monocled cobra in his field at 7 p.m. Taken to a country doctor and brought to the clinic only at 2 a.m., he died soon after.

Janka is close to the sea and Dr. Mallick has treated sea snake victims (Hydrophis). According to him death by snakebite is as low as 2%. Most cases are cobra bite and come in during the rains. Villagers fishing in paddy fields, standing in knee deep water, are generally the victims.