

(III)**HATCHING OF KING COBRA EGGS IN KUDREMUKH NATIONAL PARK**

King cobra (*Ophiophagus hanna*) is found in the forests of Kudremukh National Park, Mookambika and Someshwar sanctuaries in the Western Ghats of Karnataka State. Only on rare occasions brood of King cobra is sighted. Such a sighting occurred in Kudremukh National Park near Shringeri in the third week of April, 2004. A clutch of 24 eggs were detected near a dwelling place inside the forests. The eggs were found covered with leaf litter. The mother snake abandoned the brood upon human interference. The matter was reported to the Forest Department by the locals and the Deptt. in turn informed Mr. Romulus Whittaker, the well-known Herpetologist. He came to the spot and kept a watch on the brood and recorded all parameters

wuch as weather etc. In the rainy conditions, which prevailed, the eggs started hatching on August 9 and by August 12, twentyone hatchlings emerged from the brood. So, it was observed that the eggs hatched in about 110 days. Usually King cobra eggs hatch in about 85 days.

The young ones were very healthy and seen with the characteristic black colour with white bands, measuring about 50 cm in length. It is said that the young ones moult in about 10 days and there after start feeding, that is, upon other snakes of appropriate size! The young King cobra has functional poison sac and fangs too. All the hatchlings were picked up and released inside deep forests.

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