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Captain Thomas Hutton

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IX.—*Observations on the Habits of a large species of Galeodes.*  
By Captain THOMAS HUTTON\*.

IN the 52nd and 53rd Numbers of the 'Annals and Magazine of Natural History' are two letters from Messrs. W. S. MacLeay and W. E. Shuckard, relating to the occasional capture of small birds by certain species of *Arachnide*; and as the subject is one of some interest, I take the liberty of presenting you with a note long since made by me, on the habits of a large species of *Galeodes* common to some parts of India, and for which, if undescribed, I would propose the name of "*Galeodes vorax*."

My first observations on this species were made in 1832 at Mirzapore, where it is very abundant and of large size. During the rainy season it was my constant habit, on a fine evening, to spread a sheet upon the ground near my house, upon which was placed a small lantern to attract insects.

In a very short time, two or three of these ravenous spiders would make their appearance at the edge of the sheet, but at a respectful distance from each other, and no sooner did a moth, or a beetle, or a cricket alight upon it, than it was snapped up and devoured before I could lay hold of it. There seemed indeed to be no end to the appetite of these creatures, for they continued to seize and devour everything indiscriminately that came within their reach, even to large and hard-winged beetles, cutting them to pieces with their powerful jaws with the greatest ease. Many were the deadly fights I witnessed among these marauders as they trespassed upon each other's beats to get possession of some newly alighted prey, and often was I obliged to kill them in order that I too might in turn obtain some share of the booty. This species is, strictly speaking, nocturnal, though I have sometimes seen them active in the daytime; they live beneath stones and in holes in the ground, and never construct a net or other trap for their prey, seizing everything by main force as they roam about in search of food.

Again I fell in with this species abundantly at Neemuch, where

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On another occasion I gave it a large garden lizard, which was instantly seized by the middle of the body; the lizard, finding that it could not shake off its adversary, turned its head and bit the *Galeodes* on one leg, which obliged it immediately to quit its hold and retreat: this was owing to the seizure having been made too low down on the body, for in general the *Galeodes* seizes as close behind the shoulder as can be, in order to put it out of the victim's power to turn and bite; the lizard was allowed to escape with only a severe wound in the side, but as it lived for some days before I allowed it to run off, the bite of the *Galeodes* would not appear to be poisonous.

On another occasion, my friend Dr. Baddeley confined one of these spiders in a wall-shade with two young musk rats (*Sorex Indicus*), both of which were killed by it.

When two of these spiders are confined in a vessel together, both endeavour to make their escape, as if conscious of their mutual danger. If, in their efforts to get away, they are brought into contact, the one instantly seizes the other and devours him, the victim making no struggles whatever; but if they meet face to face, both enter into a wrestling-match for life or death.

They plant their true feet firmly on the ground, the body at the same time being elevated, and the two pairs of palpi held out in front to ward off the attack. In this attitude they advance and retire, according as either gains a slight advantage, endeavouring to throw each other to one side, so as to expose some vulnerable part, or form an opening for attack; and when this is once effected, the fortunate wrestler instantly takes advantage of it, and rushing in seizes his adversary behind the thorax, and the combat is ended; the vanquished victim yielding himself without further struggle to his inevitable fate.

The same species occurs in the Bhawulpore country, from whence I obtained it when constructing the road for the advance of the army of the Indus in 1838. It is also abundant in Afghanistan, where in all probability it is the species mistaken by Elphinstone for the *Tarantula*, which he describes as common in that country, but which I neither saw nor heard of.

The usual size of an adult specimen of "*Galeodes (vorax)*," mihi, is about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches long, and the body or abdomen equal to a thrush's egg. When in motion the body is elevated off the ground, and the two pairs of palpi or feelers are stretched out ready to make a seizure: it progresses therefore solely upon the true legs, which spring from the thorax, and are six in number. The head is armed with two strong and formidable chelæ, or double jaws, answering to the long cheliform fore-arms of the scorpion; these jaws are denticulate, and the ends are curved, sharp-pointed, and extremely hard and horny, of a dark brown

colour. Eyes two, and placed on the top of the head between the base of the jaws; the colour generally is sandy brown, and the body soft and clothed with short mouse-coloured hairs; the limbs, and especially the palpi, are furnished with long coarse hairs; beneath these are ten obtriangular plates springing from the under side of the thigh or coxæ of the posterior legs, five on each, the inner one being smallest, the outer one largest; these are of an obtriangular form, and their use appears to be still unknown. I never saw them used to assist progression in any way.

The true legs are furnished at the end with strong hooks or claws, but the two pairs of pedi-palpi are destitute of them, the anterior pair being the largest and strongest, and furnished at the end with a white retractile sucker; this, in a state of rest, is withdrawn into the last joint of the palpi, and it appears to be used to assist in climbing up surfaces, or in hanging against gravity, in the same way that flies and lizards use their feet, by the exclusion of air. In seizing its prey, one pair of jaws keeps hold, while the other is advanced to cut, and they thus alternately advance and hold till the victim is sawed in two: the only sound they emit is a hissing or rustling, caused by the friction of the two pairs of chelæ as they are advanced and withdrawn; this is only heard when the spider is suddenly disturbed or irritated.

From the tenor of Mr. W. S. MacLeay's remarks upon *Mygale* and the large species of *Epeira* which he has discovered in the vicinity of Sydney, it would appear, that although these spiders may occasionally feed upon the juices of warm-blooded animals, which accident may throw in their way, yet that their natural food consists of insects, and the fact of their killing birds at all must be regarded as a very rare exception to the general rule of their habits; and from the above remarks on *Galeodes* it will be seen that the habits of this spider in some measure corroborate Mr. MacLeay's opinion; for although, strictly speaking, the proper food of *Galeodes* consists of insects, yet, when accident throws a lizard in its way, it will not fail to seize and devour it. With regard however to its preying at all upon warm-blooded animals, we have as yet no testimony whatever, for in the experiments above cited it will be observed, that although the sparrow and musk rats were easily killed by the spider, yet that it fed upon neither of them\*.

\* Should this paper meet the eye of Mr. MacLeay, I may add, that I shall be happy to do my best in determining the habits and œconomy of any species found in my neighbourhood, if he will kindly point out his wants and wishes, and I shall likewise be happy to assist him with duplicates from my own collection.