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The defensive behavior of *Naja oxiana* with comments on the visual displays of cobras

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The defensive behaviors of a group of freshly-caught central Asiatic cobras, *Naja oxiana*, were evoked by the proximity of an experimenter. The cobras responded by hooding and holding 13-22% of their total body length in an elevated or vertical posture. From this vertical posture the cobras would launch defensive sham (closed-mouth) strikes; these strikes were typically associated with a short “burst”-like hiss and were more frequent in the smaller specimens studied. The presence of the experimenter provoked an increase in the cobra’s ventilatory rib movements as well as the tongue flick rates; the latter metric was strongly correlated with the height of vertical posturing, strike frequency and hissing frequency. Most of the observed behaviors’ results from the cobras’ visual perception are interpreted as a visual display intended as a deterrent. This interpretation raises interesting and previously unexplored, questions about intra and interspecific variation of these displays (within both *Naja* and the *Hemibungarini*), as well as the relationship between these defensive behaviors and (repeatedly evolved) ability to “spit” venom.

Biography

Alireza Nasoori is a Research student at Wildlife Biology group, Veterinary School, Hokkaido University, Japan with background on zoo and wild animal research and publications.

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