



Carrion Feeding by Himalayan Toad (*Duttaphrynus himalayanus*) Tadpoles on a Domestic Fowl (*Gallus gallus domesticus*) in Nepal

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Amphibian tadpoles function both as predators and prey in many aquatic ecosystems (e.g., Parlato and Mott 2023), but their feeding habits in Nepal have rarely been documented (Gautam and Bhattarai 2020). Two species of toads in the genus *Duttaphrynus*, *D. himalayanus* and *D. melanostictus*, occur in Nepal (Bhattarai et al. 2017, 2018, 2020; Gautam and Bhattarai 2020; Rawat et al. 2020; Khatiwada et al. 2021), and the tadpoles of both species are known to feed on carrion (Asrafuzzaman et al. 2018; Banerjee et al. 2020).

At 2350 h on 5 July 2023, during regular herpetological surveys at the Mai Pokhari Ramsar Site (27.00745, 87.93067; elev. 2,100 m), a wetland of international importance in Ilam District in eastern Nepal, we observed Himalayan Toad (*D. himalayanus*) tadpoles actively feeding on the carcass of a Domestic Fowl (*Gallus gallus domesticus*) (Fig. 1). The Himalayan Toad is the only bufonid known to occur at Mai Pokhari Ramsar Site (Rai 2011) and the tadpoles are easily identified by their flattened heads, small and sunken eyes, and dark-brown-to-black body color (McDiarmid and Altig 1999; Banerjee et al. 2020). We observed the tadpoles feeding on the carrion for 10 minutes before leaving them undisturbed.

Tadpoles typically are algivores or detritivores (e.g., Duellman and Trueb 1994), yet many species exhibit opportunistic or facultative carnivory in response to limited nutrient availability or environmental stress (Schiesari et al. 2009; Arribas et al. 2015; Parlato and Mott 2023). Carrion feeding by tadpoles has been documented in several species of anurans in various ecological conditions (e.g., Crump 1990; McDiarmid and Altig 1999). Tadpoles of *D. himalayanus* have been documented feeding on carrion in India (Banerjee et al. 2020), but our observation is the first report from Nepal and the first with the carcass of a Domestic Fowl as the source of food. Our opportunistic observation from a village in the Mai Pokhari Ramsar Site highlights the dietary plasticity and



Figure 1. Himalayan Toad (*Duttaphrynus himalayanus*) tadpoles feeding on the carcass of a Domestic Fowl (*Gallus gallus domesticus*) in Nepal. Photograph by Santosh Bhattarai.

ecological adaptability of *D. himalayanus* tadpoles with implications for understanding the resilience of tadpoles in ephemeral and human-modified habitats.

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