

Rajkumar S. Radder (1973–2008)

Rajkumar S. Radder, popularly known as 'Raju', passed away on 31 May 2008 due to cardiac arrest at his home at Mulawad when he came to India to attend his sister's wedding. He was born on 22 July 1973 in Mulawad Village, Bijapur District, Karnataka. He was the second of four children of Shivappa R. Radder, a retired high school head-master and mother Anusuya. He did his schooling at his village and stood first in secondary school public examination in the district. During his school days he was also active in extra curricular aspects that include participation in Scouts and Guides and bagged the best scout award at state level. He studied for his bachelor's degree at Bijapur and joined Department of Zoology, Karnatak University, Dharwad, for his Master's degree in Zoology in 1994. As a student, he was very impressive and was always eager to learn diverse aspects of biology and obtained first rank in M Sc with Zoology in 1996. Then he joined the same department for his doctoral work under the supervision of B. A. Shanbhag and S. K. Saidapur. He carried out original research work on the garden lizard, *Calotes versicolor* and demonstrated many interesting phenomena such as long-term oviducal egg retention (up to 6 months), egg and clutch size manipulation strategy, embryonic diapause and possible mechanism of egg retention by lowering body temperature and so on. He also pursued field biology by undertaking studies on fan-throated lizard, *Sitana ponticeriana* and the rock lizard, *Psammophilus dorsalis*. He was well recognized as an upcoming herpetologist and evolutionary biologist throughout India.

In recognition of his contribution and potential, Raju was honoured with the

prestigious 'Young Scientist Award' by the Indian Science Congress (2002) and 'Young Scientist Medal' by the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi (2003).

In 2004, Raju received the prestigious Australian Research Council Fellowship and joined the laboratory of Richard Shine at University of Sydney, Australia. He had been carrying out excellent work



on ecology of Australian lizards. His work on sex determination in the montane scincid lizard (*Bassiana duperreyi*) received world wide attention. In mammals and several other animals, it is well established that sex determination is based on sex chromosomes, i.e. to say genetic sex determination, GSD (e.g. XX – females and XY – males). In contrast, in many reptiles, temperature of the nests also affects determination of sex of the individual. This led to the popular belief that in reptiles, environmental temperature is the chief mechanism of sex determination (TSD). Radder's research showed that the sex of the montane skink is the outcome of several competing influences, rather than just due to genes or nest temperature. He showed that in a

single population both mechanisms (GSD and TSD) may operate simultaneously. These novel findings on sex determination in lizards were featured on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation television science show. Given a longer life, he would have elucidated the significance of these findings. In a short span of research career, he already had 34 research papers to his credit and some more in the pipe line.

On personal side, Raju was popular among friends and peers. Rick Shine, his host at University of Sydney, expressed in his condolence message that Raju was a fine researcher and most popular among Australian herpetologists. Robin Andrews from the Department of Biology, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, USA expressing her condolences conveyed us the message that the forthcoming Sixth Herpetological Congress: the *Symposium on Reproduction in Reptiles: From Genes to Ecology* (where Raju was to present a paper) to be held at Manaus, Brazil from 17 to 22 August 2008 will be dedicated to the memory of Radder. This gesture of herpetologists over the globe speaks of his reputation as a herpetologist and his popularity among them. With sudden, untimely demise of Raju, the country has lost a promising, upcoming scientist in the field of not only herpetology, but also evolutionary biology.

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