

## Variable reed snake attempting to swallow earthworm

**Subjects:** Variable reed snake, *Calamaria lumbricoidea* (Reptilia: Serpentes: Colubridae).  
Earthworm, *Pheretima darnleiensis* (Annelida: Oligochaeta: Megascolecidae).

**Subjects identified by:** Contributors (snake) and Shen Huei-Ping [Taiwan Endemic Species Research Institute] (earthworm).

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Island, compound of Night Safari at western shore of Upper Seletar Reservoir, between entrance and suspension bridge; 25 September 2013; 1655 hrs.

**Habitat:** On a concrete foot path surrounded by secondary forest. Substrate was wet from heavy rain in the morning.

**Observers:** Contributors and others.

**Observation:** A juvenile variable reed snake of about 15 cm total length tried to consume an earthworm of similar size when it was disturbed by the observers. Although the snake had swallowed the head of the earthworm, it appeared to have great difficulty going over the rest of the prey. Despite its sluggishness, the worm appeared too large for the snake to consume whole, and it was regurgitated. The snake was gently coaxed onto a dead leaf and transferred to a vegetated area to prevent it from being accidentally stepped on.

**Remarks:** The juvenile variable reed snake has a bright pink head and strongly resembles its cousin, the pink-headed reed snake (*Calamaria schlegeli*). The latter species can be told apart by its uniformly white underside. The underside of the variable reed snake is cream with broad black bars. The pink head is thought to mimic the appearance of the highly venomous blue Malayan coral snake (*Calliophis bivirgatus*). Reed snakes are known to feed on earthworms (Baker & Lim, 2012), and this act of predation shown here was photographed in-situ.

**Reference:** Baker, N. & K. K. P. Lim, 2012. *Wild Animals of Singapore. A Photographic Guide to Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians and Freshwater Fishes*. Reprinted with corrections and updates. Draco Publishing and Distribution Pte. Ltd. and Nature Society (Singapore). 180 pp.



Top view



Side view

Photographs by Tan Heok Hui.

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