

An apparently mating pair of Wagler's pit-viper

Subjects: Wagler's pit-viper, *Tropidolaemus wagleri* (Reptilia: Serpentes: Viperidae).

Subjects identified by: Contributor.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, near the summit; 9 December 2014; morning.

Habitat: Primary rainforest, under forest canopy on shrubbery at about 50 cm off the ground.

Observer: Contributor.

Observation: A male was found with the base of his tail positioned under the tail base of an adult female viper of about 70 cm total length. They appeared to be engaged in copulation. The male, about half the female's length, was resting his body on top of the female's lower back. They were perched motionless on a palm frond, the female with her tail twirled around the woody stem of a plant. See accompanying picture.

Remarks: The Wagler's pit-viper displays extreme sexual dimorphism. The slender males stay small and retain their juvenile colour pattern into adulthood. In contrast, the bulkier females undergo a complete colour pattern transformation and grow to about 98 cm in total length (see Baker & Lim, 2012: 120). The present observation is a rare documentation of the mating behaviour of this species in the wild.

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



A pair of apparently mating Wagler's pit-viper. The much smaller male is lying along the female's lower back. Arrow points to the position of the female's as well as the male's cloaca. Photograph by Cheryl S. W. Chia

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