

Long-tailed macaque juveniles following a painted bronzeback

Subjects: Long-tailed macaque, *Macaca fascicularis* (Mammalia: Primates: Cercopithecidae);
Painted bronzeback, *Dendrelaphis pictus* (Reptilia: Serpentes: Colubridae).

Subjects identified by: Contributor.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, MacRitchie Reservoir Park, on grass patch behind twin bus stop and at bridge above the outflow canal; 8 August 2015; around 1740 hrs.

Habitat: Parkland, next to secondary forest.

Observers: Contributor, with many others (participants of a guided walk led by the contributor to observe macaques).

Observation: The juvenile members from a group of long-tailed macaques at MacRitchie Reservoir Park were observed following a painted bronzeback of around 80 cm total length. The snake was first spotted by the contributor, who then pointed it out to the participants of the guided walk. At the same time, three juvenile macaques started to follow the snake, and even tried to touch it. Seven other juvenile macaques quickly joined in (Figs. 1 & 2), trailing the snake from the grass patch to the wooden bridge until the snake disappeared into the bush. No alarm call, a vocalization response to predators, was heard from any member of the macaque group. The adult macaques remained in their location and continued to forage on the grass patch, seemingly indifferent to the presence of the snake.

Remarks: Response of captive long-tailed macaques to pythons and snake models has been documented (van Schaik & Mitrasetia, 1990; Vitale et al., 1991). The contributor has in the past observed alarm calling, bipedal observation and startled response by long-tailed macaques to reticulated python (*Malayopython reticulatus*) and oriental whip snake (*Ahaetulla prasina*).

In Sri Lanka, wild bonnet macaques (*Macaca radiata*) have been observed to react differently to venomous and non-venomous snakes and such responses vary among adults, sub-adults and juveniles (Ramakrishnan et al., 2005). Similar observations of Singapore's long-tailed macaques and documentation are vital in understanding inter-species interactions. The present observation appears to suggest that long-tailed macaques, at least the troop featured, recognise the painted bronzeback as a non-venomous snake that is not likely to harm any of its members.

References:

- Ramakrishnan, U., R. G. Coss, J. Schank, A. Dharawat & S. Kim, 2005. Snake species discrimination by wild bonnet macaques (*Macaca radiata*). *Ethology*. 111 (4): 337-356.
- van Schaik, C., & T. Mitrasetia, 1990. Changes in the behaviour of wild long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*) after encounters with a model python. *Folia Primatologica*. 55 (2): 104-108.
- Vitale, A. F., E. Visalberghi & C. de Lillo, 1991. Responses to a snake model in captive crab-eating macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*) and captive tufted capuchins (*Cebus apella*). *International Journal of Primatology*. 12 (3): 277-286.

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Fig. 1. Five of the ten juvenile macaques following a painted bronzeback (indicated by arrow) on the grass.



Fig. 2. Painted bronzeback (indicated by arrow) attempting to distance itself from the macaques.

Photographs by Laurie Kauffman and Rick Moore