

Speckle-headed Whip Snake at the Botanic Gardens

Subject: Speckle-headed whip snake, *Ahaetulla fasciolata* (Reptilia: Serpentes: Colubridae).

Subject identified by: Law Ing Sind.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Botanic Gardens, Rainforest Trail; 18 June 2017; 1500 hrs.

Habitat: Small patch of partial primary rainforest surrounded by parkland and suburban housing estate.

Observers: Contributors.

Observation: The subject, about 1 m in total length, was observed about 1 m off the ground moving slowly over leaves of a plant right next to a boardwalk (Fig. 1 & 2). It then stopped, barely moving for more than 20 minutes, up to the moment when the observers left. It was after a downpour, and the weather was cool and cloudy. The snake did not seem to be bothered by people walking up and down the boardwalk, and the observers could approach to within touching distance.

Remarks: The featured record is of significant interest because *Ahaetulla fasciolata* is regarded as a ‘critically endangered’ species in Singapore (Lim et al., 2008: 161), and recently known only from the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve (Chow, 2017). The present record seems to show that it is not confined to the primary forest at Bukit Timah.

References:

- Chow, L. S. Y., 2017. Speckle-headed whip snake at Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. *Singapore Biodiversity Records*. 2017: 17-18.
- Lim, K. K. P., N. Baker, R. Teo & T. M. Leong, 2008. Reptiles. In: Davison, G. W. H., P. K. L. Ng & H. C. Ho (eds.). *The Singapore Red Data Book. Threatened Plants & Animals of Singapore*. Second edition. Nature Society (Singapore). pp. 160-176.



Fig. 1. Head and anterior body of speckle-headed whip snake moving over foliage. Photograph by Karen Sim

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Fig. 2. Dorsal view of the anterior half of the snake showing the distinct grey and white markings on the brownish dorsum, and dark speckling on top of the head. Photograph by Karen Sim