King cobra feeding on a monitor lizard at night

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Subjects: King cobra, Ophiophagus hannah (Reptilia: Serpentes: Elapidae); Clouded monitor, Varanus nebulosus (Reptilia: Sauria: Varanidae).

Subjects identified by: Ade Kurniawan.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Mandai Lake Road, compound of Night Safari; 3 April 2018; 2030 hrs.

Habitat: Parkland adjacent to secondary forest, on a metaled road.

Observers: Nasruddin bin Tohed & Gladys Lee.

Observation: A king cobra of approximately 3 m total length was observed with its jaws clamped over the head of an apparently lifeless monitor lizard of around 1 m total length (see accompanying picture). Possibly disturbed by the observers, the snake dragged its prey into roadside vegetation. However, the observers did not stay to view the feeding process.

Remarks: Even though the primary diet of king cobras consists of snakes, they are also known to feed on monitor lizards (Das, 2010: 317). Radiographs of a king cobra specimen from Rifle Range Road revealed partially digested Varanus sp. remains (Lim et al., 2011: 145). This observation is noteworthy as king cobras are generally believed to be largely diurnal (see Lim et al., 2011: 148).

References: