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Attempted predation of Sunda colugo by a reticulated python

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Subjects: Sunda colugo, *Galeopterus variegatus* (Mammalia: Dermoptera: Cynocephalidae);
Reticulated python, *Malayopython reticulatus* (Reptilia: Squamata: Pythonidae).

Subjects identified by: Charlene Yeong.

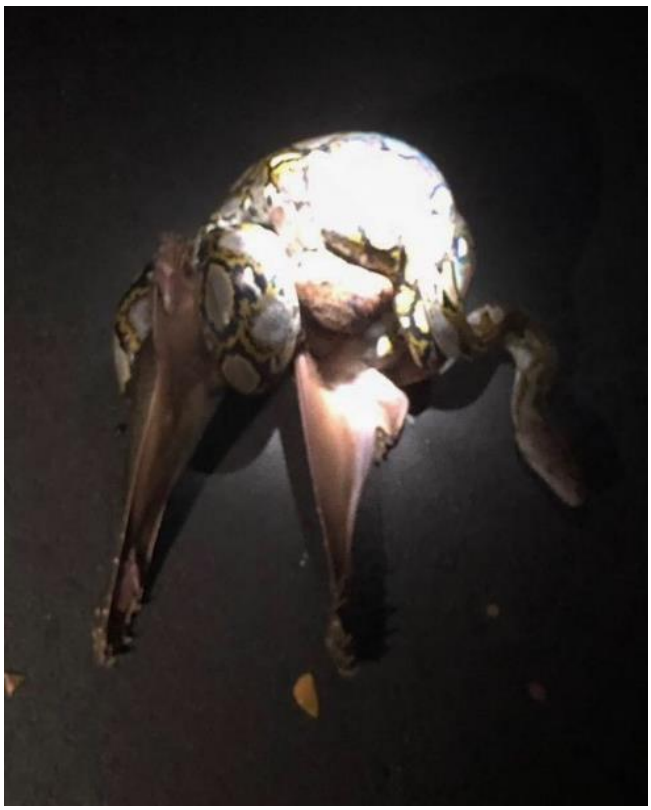
Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Mandai Lake Road, in compound of Singapore Zoo; 28 September 2018; 2030 hrs.

Habitat: Suburban parkland and secondary forest.

Observers: Paige Lee, Joanne Lim, Delia Quek & Charlene Yeong.

Observation: During a survey held within the grounds of the Singapore Zoo, the observers heard a loud thud, followed by a prolonged vocalisation. Upon reaching the source of commotion some 20 m away, the observers saw a juvenile reticulated python, about 1.5m long, coiled around a colugo on the tarmac (see accompanying picture). The vocalisation was made by the colugo, and it continued to call, presumably in distress. Possibly spooked by the observers, the python released the colugo shortly after and moved into the shrubbery.

While the colugo struggled on the ground, the observers carefully restrained it by hand for a quick visual assessment. Apart from a 7 mm long laceration on its maxillary lip and a small amount of fresh blood around the mouth and nostrils, no other lesions were detected. It was an adult male with a reddish tinge to the pelage. He was placed as high up as possible onto a nearby tree and monitored for signs of weakness or distress. Shortly after, he climbed up higher into the tree and remained resting there. When the observers returned about an hour later, the colugo had disappeared from their sight.



Photograph by Paige Lee

Remarks: In Singapore, colugos occur in forest, largely in the Bukit Timah and Central Catchment Nature Reserves (Lim, 2007). Wild individuals are regularly seen in the Singapore Zoo (Lim, 2007; Charlene Yeong, personal observations). Being cryptically coloured, it is suggested that they rely primarily on camouflage, and less so on gliding, to avoid predation (Byrnes et. al., 2011; Lim, 2007). The featured sighting reinforces the fact that the reticulated python is a natural predator of colugos. Other predators include the changeable hawk-eagle and the long-tailed macaque (Lim, 2007).

References:

Byrnes, G., N. T-L. Lim, C. Yeong & A. J. Spence, 2011. Sex differences in the locomotor ecology of a gliding mammal, the Malayan colugo (*Galeopterus variegatus*). *Journal of Mammalogy*. 92(2): 444-451.

Lim, N. T-L. 2007. *Colugo. The Flying Lemur of South-east Asia*. Draco Publishing Pte Ltd, Singapore. 78 pp.