

## Orange-bellied ringneck snake eating spider

Holly Chapman

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**Subjects:** Orange-bellied ringneck, *Gongylosoma baliodeirum* (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae);  
Wandering spider, *Ctenus* sp. (Arachnida: Araneae: Ctenidae).

**Subjects identified by:** Holly Chapman and Kelvin K. P. Lim.

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Island, Central Catchment Nature Reserve, trail along the eastern shore of MacRitchie Reservoir; 9 August 2019; around 1300 hrs.

**Habitat:** Secondary rainforest.

**Observer:** Holly Chapman and others.

**Observation:** An orange-bellied ringneck snake of about 30 cm total length was found at the centre of the gravel trail engaged in eating a spider (Fig. 1). The snake had clamped its jaws over the spider's abdomen (Fig. 2) and was moving them to work the entire prey into its mouth (Fig. 3). Although it seemed unaffected by the observers, the snake did pause in ingesting the spider every so often. Once the spider was completely swallowed after about ten minutes, the snake slithered off into the jungle leaf litter. A video of the event, recorded by the observer, can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/2ZSQHdPmq3U>

**Remarks:** *Gongylosoma baliodeirum* is a secretive and little known snake that seems to be restricted to the forests of the Bukit Timah and Central Catchment Nature Reserves in Singapore, and locally regarded as 'endangered' (Lim et al., 2008: 163). It is known to eat spiders and insects, as well as lizards (Das, 2018: 50). The present record seems to be a rare in-situ observation of predation by this uncommonly seen snake.

The prey in this instance is a ground-dwelling forest spider, likely one of three species of *Ctenus* that are recorded from Singapore (Court & Wang, 2011: 500). The observer believes that the frequent pauses the snake made while swallowing the spider were part of the ingestion process. If the snake had been spooked by the human on-lookers, it would most likely have abandoned its prey or slithered away with it.



Fig. 1. Dorso-lateral view of entire snake attacking a wandering spider. Photograph by Holly Chapman



Fig. 2. Dorsal view of snake with its jaws clamped onto the abdomen of the spider.



Fig. 3. Dorso-frontal view of the snake with the spider nearly consumed. Note the legs of the prey protruding from the snake's mouth.

Photographs by Holly Chapman

**References:**

- Court, D. J. & L. K. Wang, 2011. Wandering spiders. Family Ctenidae. In: Ng, P. K. L., R. T. Corlett & H. T. W. Tan (eds.). *Singapore Biodiversity. An Encyclopedia of the Natural Environment and Sustainable Development*. Editions Didier Millet in association with the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research, National University of Singapore. p. 500.
- Das, I., 2018. *A Naturalist's Guide to the Snakes of Southeast Asia*. Second edition. John Beaufoy Publishing Ltd, U. K. 176 pp.
- 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.