

Biodiversity Record: Unusual behaviour of a Dumeril's monitor at Upper Seletar

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Subject: Dumeril's monitor, *Varanus dumerilii* (Reptilia: Squamata: Varanidae).

Subject identified by: Ilan Chanani-Parikh and Ethan Lai.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Upper Seletar; 14 October 2022; around 1930 hrs.

Habitat: Edge of secondary forest, on the road.

Observer: Elaine Yi Ling Lui.



Fig. 1. Dorsal view of the head and torso of the Dumeril's monitor on the road. Fig. 2. The subject attempting to climb up the observer's leg. (Screenshots from video by: Elaine Yi Ling Lui).

Observation: One example of about 1.4 m total length was found in the middle of a road which is not accessible to motor vehicles. The observer approached and stood approximately 3 m away. The subject immediately noticed the observer and to the observer's surprise, approached her with its tongue constantly flicking (Fig. 1). The observer was taken aback when the monitor attempted to climb up her leg (Fig. 2). It was gently rebuffed. The lizard repeatedly approached the observer in an apparently calm and non-aggressive manner, even as she tried to back away and shone a torch at it. The subject was then nudged gently off the road and into the forest where it did not turn back. Earlier, the day had been sunny and it had not rained.

A video of the event, recorded by the observer, can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYzIk6grcZ8>.

Remarks: This is the second reported sighting of the Dumeril's monitor in Singapore in recent years. It was last recorded in 2008 in the Nee Soon Swamp Forest (Yong et al., 2008), which is adjacent to the location of the featured subject, and where a small population is believed to be residing. From the apparent rarity of sightings, the Dumeril's monitor, at least in Singapore, is presumed to be exceedingly shy and reclusive. However, the featured subject behaved in a totally unexpected manner. Instead of avoiding the torch beam and bolting as the animal in the previous sighting did (see Yong et al., 2008), it deliberately approached the observer and made repeated attempts to climb up her leg. Although it seems very unlikely, the subject's behaviour gives the impression that it might be an abandoned pet that had imprinted on humans. The observer is unable to explain the cause and motive of this unusual behaviour in this seemingly wild lizard.

Literature cited:

Yong DL, Fam SD & Ng JJ (2008) Rediscovery of Dumeril's monitor, *Varanus dumerilii* (Varanidae) in Singapore. Nature in Singapore, 1: 21–22.