

Biodiversity Record: Predation of green crested lizard by a purple heron

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Subjects: Purple heron, *Ardea purpurea* (Aves: Pelecaniformes: Ardeidae);
Green crested lizard, *Bronchocela cristatella* (Reptilia: Squamata: Agamidae).

Subjects identified by: Wei Jian Wong.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, MacRitchie Reservoir Park; 29 April 2023; around 0955 hrs.

Habitat: Riparian vegetation along freshwater lake.

Observers: Wei Jian Wong and Huan Gui Wee.

Observation: An adult purple heron was observed adopting a strike position while facing riparian vegetation along the edge of the reservoir. The bird then lunged forward and, upon retracting its neck, was seen to have captured a green crested lizard in its beak (Fig. 1). The heron adjusted the position of the lizard a few times with no apparent attempt to incapacitate it. Within a minute, the bird swallowed the lizard whole, presumably while it was still alive.

Remarks: The purple heron is known to forage along water bodies and feed on a variety of organisms which consist primarily of fish, as well as other small vertebrates and invertebrates (Birdlife International, 2023). While it is expected that lizards would be taken as food, there appears to be no documentation of purple herons preying on green crested lizards. This could be due to the latter typically occurring in terrestrial habitats.

It is interesting to note that more aggressive means of disabling prey, such as repeatedly hurling it on the ground (see Singh, 2018), was not observed. This may be that the green crested lizard is a relatively harmless prey to the heron compared to larger prey such as eels and snakes that may be more difficult for the bird to subdue.

Literature cited:

BirdLife International (2023) Species factsheet: *Ardea purpurea*. <http://www.birdlife.org> (Accessed 1 May 2023)
Singh A (2018) Purple Heron – feeding behaviour, eel. Bird Ecology Study Group. <https://besgroup.org/2018/01/14/purple-heron-feeding-behaviour-eel/> (Accessed 1 May 2023)



Fig 1. Lateral view of purple heron with the green crested lizard (indicated by arrow) captured in its beak. (Photograph by: Wei Jian Wong)