

Biodiversity Record: Predation of gravid Sumatran gliding lizard by Oriental whip snake

Robbin Tan*, Gabrielle Faye Fann Poh & Zhen Yan Leong

Email: robbintann.tr@gmail.com (*corresponding author)

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Subjects: Oriental whip snake, *Ahaetulla prasina* (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae);
Sumatran flying lizard, *Draco sumatranus* (Reptilia: Squamata: Agamidae).

Subjects identified by: Robbin Tan.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, car park at Neo Tiew Crescent; 20 June 2023; 1325–1358 hrs.

Habitat: Suburban parkland next to mangrove.

Observers: Robbin Tan, Gabrielle Faye Fann Poh and Zhen Yan Leong.



Fig 1. Whip snake seizing the gliding lizard by the nape and left forelimb. Bulges on the abdomen of the lizard indicate the presence of eggs. Fig. 2. Snake in the process of swallowing the gliding lizard head-first, when it had stopped struggling after being held in the snake's jaws for nearly 30 minutes. (Photographs by: Robbin Tan).

Observation: An Oriental whip snake of around 1.5 m total length was observed about 1.4 m up a tree. Its head and anterior body were dangling off a branch, and its jaws were clamped onto the nape and left forelimb of a Sumatran gliding lizard of about 15 cm total length (Fig. 1). The lizard was struggling and bulges on its abdomen indicate that it was carrying eggs. The snake held on to the lizard for nearly 30 minutes, presumably it was injecting venom into the lizard. Once the lizard stopped struggling, the snake proceeded to swallow it head-first (Fig. 2), taking around 8 minutes to fully ingest its prey.

Remarks: The featured observation shows that *Draco sumatranus* is one of the lizards represented in the diet of the Oriental whip snake, which is common and widespread in Singapore (Baker & Lim, 2012). Although this snake is rear-fanged venomous, its bite produces only mild symptoms in humans (Charlton, 2020). However, the observation seems to suggest that the venom is lethal to its prey. It is not clear if the lizard was paralysed or dead when it stopped struggling and was being ingested by the snake.

Literature cited:

Baker N & Lim KKP (2012) Wild Animals of Singapore. A Photographic Guide to Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians and Freshwater Fishes. Updated edition. Draco Publishing and Distribution Pte. Ltd. and Nature Society (Singapore), 180 pp.

Charlton T (2020) A Guide to Snakes of Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore. Natural History Publications (Borneo), Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, viii + 299 pp.