

Biodiversity Record: Predation of a green crested lizard by a Kopstein's bronzeback

Wei Jian Wong

Email: wweijian96@gmail.com

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Subjects: Kopstein's bronzeback, *Dendrelaphis kopsteini* (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae);
Green crested lizard, *Bronchocela cristatella* (Reptilia: Squamata: Agamidae).

Subjects identified by: Wei Jian Wong.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Bukit Timah, Dairy Farm Nature Park; 8 October 2023; around 1000 hrs.

Habitat: Secondary forest.

Observer: Wei Jian Wong.

Observation: A Kopstein's bronzeback of around one metre total length was observed on the forest floor grasping a green crested lizard by its nape (Fig. 1). It bit the occasionally struggling lizard repeatedly with its jaws in an alternate, left-right manner. After about five minutes, when the lizard had stopped struggling, the snake began to swallow the lizard head-first (Fig. 2). Within 10 minutes, the bronzeback had swallowed the lizard up to its hind limbs (Fig. 3). The prey was almost completely consumed after 20 minutes (Fig. 4). The bronzeback then slid up a tree and out of the observer's view.



Fig 1. Bronzeback grasping the lizard by its nape, with blood visible along the lizard's back. Fig 2. The bronzeback swallowing the lizard head-first (Photographs by: Wei Jian Wong).

Remarks: In Singapore, there have been multiple records of the Kopstein's bronzeback preying on the green crested lizard (e.g., O'Dempsey, 2011; McCleary & Ichtiarani, 2015 as *Calotes versicolor*; Baker, 2018). The present observation is interesting as the snake was observed to bite the lizard repeatedly on its nape, seemingly to immobilise its prey by injecting venom, or, to a lesser extent, by inflicting physical trauma. While there is uncertainty on whether the Kopstein's bronzeback and other members of the genus *Dendrelaphis* are venomous (Baker, 2018), at least to their prey, this observation appears to lend support for such an assumption.



Fig 3. Bronzeback with the lizard partially swallowed until the latter's hind limbs. Fig 4. The lizard almost completely swallowed, with just the end of the tail visible (Photographs by: Wei Jian Wong).

Literature cited:

- Baker N (2018) A Kopstein's bronzeback eating a green crested lizard. Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2018: 66–69.
McCleary RJR & Ichtiarani R (2015) Predation of a non-native changeable lizard (*Calotes versicolor*) by the native Kopstein's bronzeback snake (*Dendrelaphis kopsteini*) in Singapore. Herpetology Notes, 8: 303–304.
O'Dempsey T (2011) Reptile eats reptile. Nature Watch, 19: 22–23.