

Twin-barred gliding snake hunting spotted house gecko

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Subjects: Twin-barred Tree Snake, *Chrysopelea pelias* (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae);
Spotted House Gecko, *Gekko monarchus* (Reptilia: Squamata: Gekkonidae).

Subjects identified by: Toh Wei Yang.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Central Catchment Nature Reserve, Lower Peirce Trail, 3-4 meters from Casuarina Road entrance; 2 April 2019; 1345-1440 hrs.

Habitat: Mature secondary forest, under overcast sky. It had rained the night before.

Observers: Toh Wei Yang & Dayna Cheah Yu Min.

Observation: 1345 hrs - A twin-barred gliding snake of 70-80 cm total length was seen on the leaf litter. It then climbed about half-a-metre up a tree, and paused for a moment. It appeared to have sensed the presence of a spotted house gecko of about 12 cm total length, around 3 m directly above it on the same side of the tree. The snake then moved to the opposite side of the trunk, and continued to climb up to the same level as the gecko.

1357 hrs - The snake positioned itself slightly above the gecko on the other side of the trunk. It moved its head slowly towards the gecko. When it noticed the snake, the gecko scuttled off in the opposite direction from the approaching snake, which struck at the gecko, but missed. Immediately, the snake swung its head back around the tree, and managed to intercept the gecko on the other side where it succeeded in biting onto the side of the gecko's torso and instantly coiling the anterior half of its body around the lizard.

1400 hrs - Both animals fell at least 3 m to the ground. They landed on the leaf litter with the snake still biting and constricting the gecko (Fig. 1).

1428 hrs - The snake released its bite on the apparently dead gecko. The gecko had also been biting the snake on its underside, and the snake struggled for 2 minutes trying to free itself from the bite.

1431 hrs - The snake located the head of the gecko and began to swallow the lizard head first (Fig. 2).

1440 hrs - The gecko was completely ingested.

A sequence of this predation event, up to the moment before both predator and prey fell to the ground, can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/NmQczHKbpRw>

Remarks: In Singapore, the spotted house gecko has been observed being attacked and eaten by the twin-barred gliding snake on no less than three previous occasions (see Leong & Foo, 2009; Tan, 2014; Tan & Lim, 2014). The featured observation records the twin-barred gliding snake as an active hunter. It is interesting in that the snake seems to have adopted a hunting strategy. It appears that the snake was able to judge the proximity of the lizard, and then creeping up to it without keeping it in its sight, before mounting an ambush at close range.

References:

- Leong T. M. & S. K. Foo, 2009. Attempted predation on a large gecko by a twin-barred tree snake, *Chrysopelea pelias* (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae). *Nature in Singapore*. 2: 311-316.
- Tan S. K., 2014. Twin-barred gliding snake preying on spotted house gecko. *Singapore Biodiversity Records*. 2014: 70.
- Tan S. K. & K. K. P. Lim, 2014. A twin-barred gliding snake's failed attempt to prey on gecko. *Singapore Biodiversity Records*. 2014: 72.



Fig. 1. Snake and gecko landed on the leaf litter after falling from the tree, with the snake retaining its bite and coils on its prey.



Fig. 2. With the gecko apparently dead, the snake commenced to swallow its prey head-first.

Photographs by Toh Wei Yang