

Capture of a lesser Asiatic yellow house bat by a paradise gliding snake

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Subjects: Paradise gliding snake, *Chrysopelea paradisi* (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae);
Lesser Asiatic yellow house bat, *Scotophilus kuhlii* (Mammalia: Chiroptera: Vespertilionidae).

Subjects identified by: Emmanuel Goh.

Location, date and time: Pulau Ubin; 29 May 2019; around 1700 hrs.

Habitat: Rural village. Under the tiled rooftop of a single-storey concrete building.

Observer: Emmanuel Goh.

Observation: An adult yellow house bat was observed in the coils of a paradise gliding snake that was suspended from a wooden beam at the ceiling (Fig. 1). Closer inspection revealed a baby bat clinging onto the rear end of the snake's body. The snake subsequently took notice of the baby bat and moved its head upwards and towards it (Fig. 2). This movement of the distracted snake appeared to have caused it to loosen its grip on the adult bat, and the bat attempted to break free. An aerial struggle ensued, causing most of the snake's coil to untangle. However, the snake managed to regain control of the bat by biting it and coiling around it once more. The observer did not stay to watch the events that followed.

Remarks: Snakes are some of the most prominent vertebrate predators of bats. In Singapore, the paradise gliding snake has been recorded to hunt bamboo bats (*Tylonycteris* sp.) at their roost (Chan & D'Rozario, 2013). The lesser Asiatic yellow house bat is adaptable to the urban environment, often roosting in the roof spaces of buildings (Baker & Lim, 2012: 149). The paradise gliding snake sometimes enters buildings (see Tan, 2014) presumably in search of prey. As such, a predation interaction such as the one featured here is to be expected.

Paradise gliding snakes appear to feed largely on lizards, and they tend to subdue prey by coiling around it (Morgany, 2018; Tan & Chapman, 2019). While the coils may be effective in restraining prey, they do not appear muscular and strong enough to asphyxiate and crush the prey like pythons do. For larger prey like the house bat featured here, it is suspected that *Chrysopelea* partially subdues it with venom delivered through multiple bites. Although the venom seems mild to humans, it may be effective in immobilising smaller vertebrates (see Tweedie, 1983: 65). While it may not kill outright, it will at least make the victim easier to manage. The snake in the featured observation appeared to be waiting for the bat to succumb to the effects of its venom while holding it in its coils.

It seems that the baby bat is unlikely to survive the incident for its instinct to cling suggests that it is still nursing and too young to fly. We assume that the adult in the snake's coil is its mother. Even the parent should escape, the bat pup is unlikely to be retrieved, and will probably cling on to the snake until it is eaten.

References:

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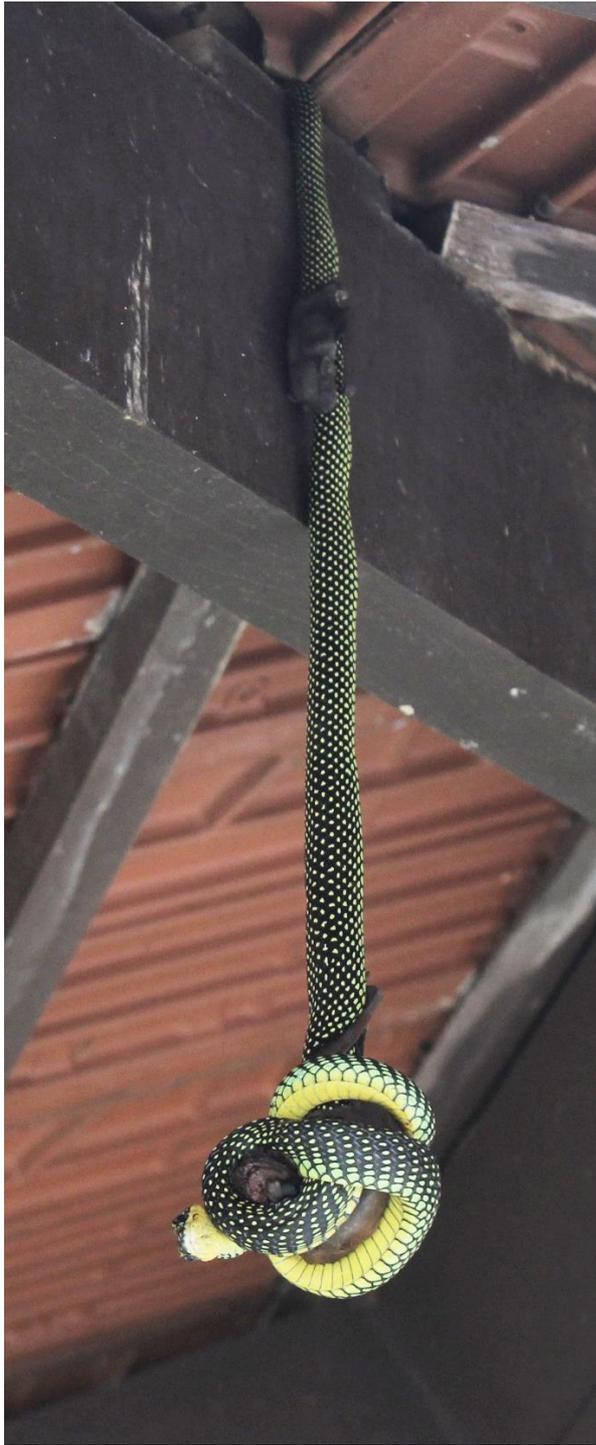


Fig. 1.

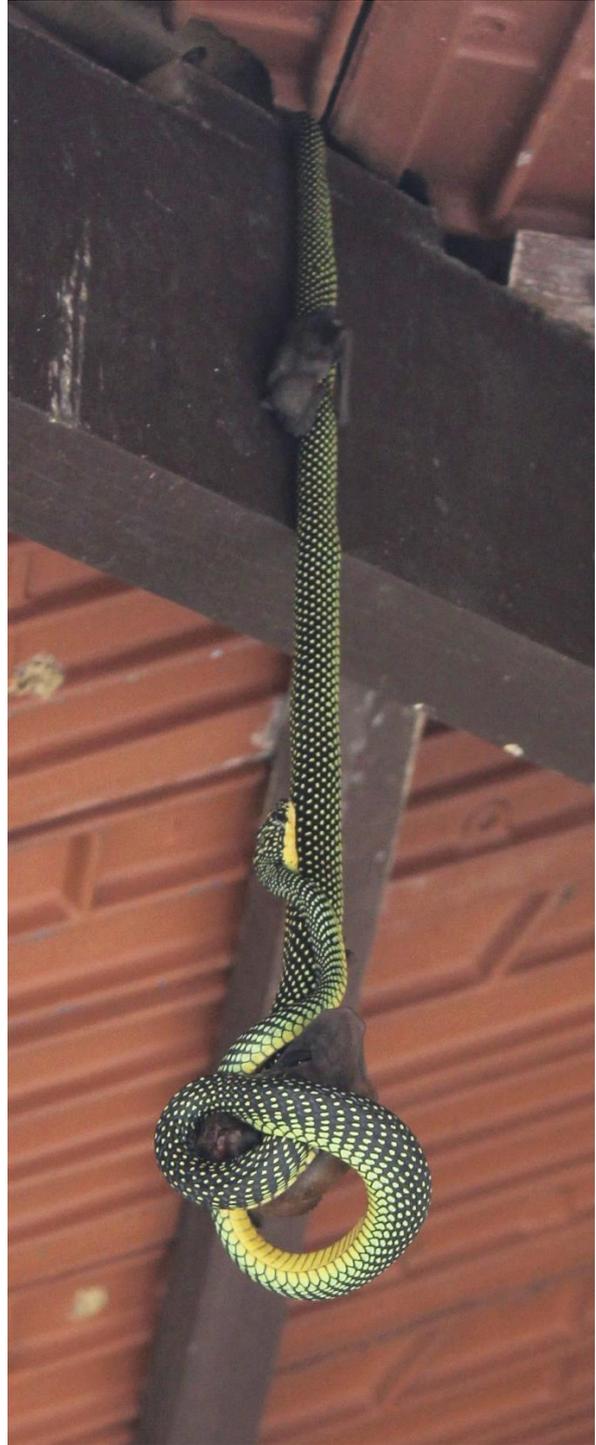


Fig. 2.

Photographs by Emmanuel Goh