

## Rediscovery of the lined blind snake in Singapore

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**Subject:** Striped blind snake, *Ramphotyphlops lineatus* (Reptilia: Squamata: Typhlopidae).

**Subject identified by:** Kelvin K. P. Lim.

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Island, Bukit Timah, mountain bike trail in buffer zone along the south-eastern periphery of Bukit Timah Nature Reserve; 16 September 2019; 1842 hrs.

**Habitat:** Young secondary forest bordering sections of primary forest.

**Observer:** John van Wyhe.

**Observation:** An example of 52.4 cm total length (51.7 cm snout-vent length) was found dead on the trail (Fig. 1). With permission from NParks, it was deposited at the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum at the National University of Singapore for preservation (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Dead *Ramphotyphlops lineatus* in-situ on the biking trail. Photograph by John van Wyhe.



Fig. 2. Dorsal view of *Ramphotyphlops lineatus*, ex-situ. Photograph by Kelvin K. P. Lim

**Remarks:** The lined blind-snake was first recorded from Singapore by Cantor (1847: 897 as *Pilidion lineatum*) based on an adult specimen at the Natural History Museum (London) presented by Major-General Hardwicke (Boulenger, 1893: 15 as *Typhlops lineatus*). The status of *Ramphotyphlops lineatus* in Singapore is regarded as indeterminate (Baker & Lim, 2012: 169) as there has been no subsequent record of this species there for over 172 years. This species was not detected during the 2015-2016 vertebrate surveys conducted at the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve (Teo & Thomas, 2019). The featured specimen (Fig. 2) would, therefore, represent a significant rediscovery in Singapore.

The featured specimen is also of interest in that it is about 4 cm longer than the maximum total length recorded for the species, which is 48 cm total length (see Tweedie, 1983: 27; Das, 2010: 348). *Ramphotyphlops lineatus* is a fossorial snake that inhabits lowland and submontane tropical forests, and is known to occur in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand south to Peninsular Malaysia, Sumatra (including Banka and Nias Islands), Borneo and Java (Das, 2010: 348).

In Singapore, *Ramphotyphlops lineatus* is distinguishable from the common Brahminy blind snake (*Indotyphlops braminus*, as *Ramphotyphlops braminus* in Baker & Lim, 2012: 90) and the locally rare white-bellied blind snake (*Argyrophis muelleri*, as *Typhlops muelleri* in Baker & Lim, 2012: 90) by its lack of a preocular scale and its distinct colour pattern consisting of ten dark brown longitudinal lines (or dark brown with a yellowish spot on each scale) on its dorsum as opposed to the presence of preoculars and solid black dorsums of the other two species. (see Tweedie, 1983: 27 as *Typhlops lineatus*, *Ramphotyphlops braminus* and *Typhlops diardi muelleri*; Das, 2010: 348 as *Ramphotyphlops braminus* and *Typhlops muelleri*).

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