

Predation of brown tree skink by a Kopstein's bronzeback snake

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<http://www.ecologyasia.com/html-menu/feedback.htm>

Subjects: Kopstein's or red-necked bronzeback, *Dendrelaphis kopsteini* (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae);
Brown tree skink, *Dasia grisea* (Reptilia: Squamata: Scincidae).

Subjects identified by: Nick Baker.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Thomson Nature Park, Lorong Pelita; 24 December 2019; 1043-1048 hrs.

Habitat: Secondary forest.

Observer: Nick Baker.

Observation: At 1043 hrs a Kopstein's bronzeback of about one metre total length was observed in the middle of Lorong Pelita, an old, single-lane, asphalt road running through Thomson Nature Park. The snake was grasping a brown tree skink, its jaws clamped over the lizard's torso (Fig. 1). Upon sensing the observer's presence, the snake moved slowly to the side of the road, and climbed into low vegetation where it proceeded to consume its prey within five minutes. The lizard was swallowed sideways in a bent position such that its head, tail and a hind leg were protruding out of the snake's mouth at one point of the ingestion process (Fig. 2). Having consumed the skink completely, the snake moved away deeper into the forest.

Remarks: *Dendrelaphis kopsteini* is known to be a relatively common and widespread snake in Singapore (Baker & Lim, 2012: 100). It feeds on frogs and lizards, and has on several instances, been recorded preying on the green crested lizard (*Bronchocela cristatella*) (see Baker, 2018). One example has been observed eating another snake (Ng, 2015). Although it does not seem to have been recorded locally, the predation of a skink by this species is not unexpected.

The brown tree skink (*Dasia grisea*) was recently recorded in tree holes at Thomson Nature Park (Baker, 2019). Juveniles have dark bands on the tail which are present from base to tip (see Fig. 2; Grismer, 2011: 548). The olive tree skink (*Dasia olivacea*) is known from the peripheral area (Baker, 2014) but has yet to be recorded from Thomson Nature Park. The juvenile form resembles the brown tree skink in colour pattern but can be distinguished by the absence of black bands on the tail (see Baker & Lim, 2012: 84; Grismer, 2011: 554).

References:

- Baker N (2014) Olive tree skink roadkill at Old Upper Thomson Road. Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2014: 297.
Baker N (2018) A Kopstein's bronzeback eating a green crested lizard. Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2018: 66-69.
Baker N (2019) Brown tree skink and white-bellied rat snake at Thomson Nature Park. Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2019: 151-152.
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.
Grismer LL (2011) Lizards of Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore, and their Adjacent Archipelagos. Their Description, Distribution, and Natural History. Edition Chimaira, Frankfurt am Main. 728 pp.
Ng L (2015) Kopstein's bronzeback eating painted bronzeback. Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2015: 23.



Fig. 1. Dorso-lateral view of the entire snake on the ground with the olive tree skink being held in its mouth.



Fig. 2. The prey being swallowed sideways. Note the lizard's banded tail and head protruding on the opposite side of the snake's head.

Photographs by Nick Baker