

Biodiversity Record: Apparent predation of striped kukri snake by dwarf snakehead

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Subjects: Dwarf snakehead, *Channa limbata* (Teleostei: Anabantiformes: Channidae);
Striped kukri snake, *Oligodon octolineatus* (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae).

Subjects identified by: Law Ing Sind.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Upper Seletar Reservoir Park; 8 March 2025; around 2035–2105 hrs.

Habitat: Freshwater stream at the edge of swamp-forest.

Observers: Tan Robbin and Tan Kheng Herng Jaiden.

Observation: A dwarf snakehead of approximately 17 cm total length was observed with about 8 cm of the rear portion of a striped kukri snake sticking out of its mouth (Figs. 1 & 2). There were multiple bite marks on the snake's body, and the tip of its tail seemed to have been bitten off. The fish darted about in the stream with the snake, occasionally seeking shelter among submerged leaf litter and detritus, and gradually swallowing its prey. The observers left after around 30 minutes. They were not able to see if the snake was fully ingested.



Fig. 1. Dorsal view of dwarf snakehead with the snake in its mouth at 2035 hrs (Photograph by: Tan Kheng Herng Jaiden).

Remarks: The dwarf snakehead primarily inhabits slow-flowing freshwater streams with abundant leaf litter. It has been observed burrowing into detritus and soft mud, likely as a means of evading predation or detection. This nocturnal fish is known to prey on terrestrial insects, small fish and crustaceans (Baker & Lim, 2012 as *Channa gachua*). This observation seems to be the first record of one eating a snake in the wild.

The striped kukri snake is considered a widespread and common reptile in Singapore (Baker & Lim, 2012). While it is generally terrestrial in its habits, it has been observed to climb up vegetation (Will, 2018), as well as being a proficient swimmer (Goh & Law, 2021).

It is not known if the fish had actively attacked and devoured the snake while it was alive, or if it had taken an already dead snake. In the former situation, the snake, being a terrestrial species, would have taken to the water to swim to the other side of the stream when it was attacked.



Fig. 2. Dorsal view of the dwarf snakehead with the snake in its mouth at 2100 hrs (Photograph by: Tan Robbin).

Literature cited:

- 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), Singapore, 180 pp.
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- Will U (2018) An arboreal striped kukri snake. Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2018: 32.