

House wolf snake preying on flat-tailed gecko

Subjects: House wolf snake, *Lycodon capucinus* (Reptilia: Serpentes: Colubridae);
Flat-tailed gecko, *Hemidactylus platyurus* (Reptilia: Sauria: Gekkonidae).

Subjects identified by: Contributor & Marcus A. H. Chua.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Bedok, Kew Drive; 26 May 2016; around 2015 hrs.

Habitat: Sub-urban, in low concrete building.

Observer: Contributor.

Observation: A wolf snake, about 35 cm total length was found constricting an adult flat-tailed gecko (Fig. 1-3). Both predator and prey were first noticed when they fell from a ledge on the wall in front of the observer. The fairly large lizard was constantly swishing its tail while trapped in the snake's coils and with its head partially in the snake's jaws. At one point, the snake somewhat flipped over to change position (Fig. 4), presumably to obtain a better grip of its prey. The lizard made some distress vocalizations while it was struggling. It was consumed whole, forming a bulge in the snake. This bulge soon smoothed out, and the snake moved slowly (Fig. 5) down ten flights of steps and then stopped presumably to rest. The observer then switched off the lights and left it alone. The feeding process took about half-an-hour.

Remarks: The house wolf snake is a common reptile in suburban and rural habitats in Singapore, and feeds mainly on geckos (Baker & Lim, 2012: 104). As shown in the attached photographs (Figs. 1-5), the prey is seized by the head and held in the snake's coils until it is subdued (Lim & Lee, 1989: 54). It appears that the snake constricts its prey to prevent it from escaping, and does not seem to suffocate it like a python does.



Fig. 1. Photograph by Vilma D'Rozario



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.

Photographs by Vilma D'Rozario

References:

- Baker, N. & K. K. P. Lim, 2012. *Wild Animals of Singapore. A Photographic Guide to Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians and Freshwater Fishes*. Updated edition. Draco Publishing & Distribution Pte. Ltd. and Nature Society (Singapore). 180 pp.
- Lim, F. L. K. & M. T.-M. Lee, 1989. *Fascinating Snakes of Southeast Asia - an Introduction*. Tropical Press Sdn. Bhd., Kuala Lumpur. xvii + 124 pp.

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