

White-throated kingfisher holding a striped keelback

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Subjects: White-throated kingfisher, *Halcyon smyrnensis* (Aves: Halcyonidae);
Striped keelback, *Xenochrophis vittatus* (Reptilia: Squamata: Natricidae).

Subjects identified by: Morgany d/o Thangavelu.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Pasir Ris Park; 25 August 2018; 1107-1110 hrs.

Habitat: Urban parkland.

Observer: Morgany d/o Thangavelu.

Observation: An adult white-throated kingfisher was observed at about 3 m up on a branch holding a dead striped keelback of about 35 cm in its beak. The snake was limp and presumed to be dead. The bird was trying to manipulate the snake with its beak, possibly positioning it for swallowing, although this act was not observed.

Remarks: In Singapore, the white-throated kingfisher is a common resident bird of secondary scrub, old plantations, reservoir edges, open fields and parkland. Although its prey consists of arthropods, it is also known to eat lizards and even small birds (Yong et al., 2017: 96). It is therefore, not surprising that small snakes are also taken by this bird. However, it is not ascertained if the snake was found dead by the kingfisher, or if it was indeed caught and killed by the bird. The striped keelback is a common small snake of rural and suburban areas, and is believed to be an introduced species in Singapore (Baker & Lim, 2008: 114).

References:

- Baker, N. & K. K. P. Lim, 2008. *Wild Animals of Singapore. A Photographic Guide to Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians and Freshwater Fishes*. Nature Society (Singapore) and Draco Publishing and Distribution Pte. Ltd. 180 pp.
- Yong D. L., K. C. Lim & T. K. Lee, 2017. *A Naturalist's Guide to the Birds of Singapore*. 3rd edition. John Beaufoy Publishing Ltd., England. 176 pp.



Fig. 1. Latero-ventral view of kingfisher holding midsection of dead snake (ventral view) in its beak.



Fig. 2. The narrow brown stripes on the side of the snake and the black ventral bars can be seen here.

Photographs by Morgany d/o Thangavelu