

## Ball python and Wagler's pit-viper at Old Upper Thomson Park Connector

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**Subjects:** Ball python, *Python regius* (Reptilia: Squamata: Pythonidae);  
Wagler's pit-viper, *Tropidolaemus wagleri* (Reptilia: Squamata: Viperidae).

**Subjects identified by:** Noel Thomas and Nick Baker.

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Island, Old Upper Thomson Road, 250 m north of the junction with Casuarina Road; 24 April 2020; around 2000 hrs.

**Habitat:** Secondary forest edge.

**Observer:** Nick Baker.

**Observation:** During an evening walk in his neighbourhood, the author found a ball python (Fig. 1) at the edge of the V-drain which runs alongside the recently-opened Old Upper Thomson park connector. Just 2.5 m from the python was a sub-adult female Wagler's pit-viper (Fig. 2), also at the edge of the drain. The python had an estimated total length of 1.2 m, and the pit-viper was around 40 cm in total length. While the pit-viper was left in place, the ball python was retrieved by an officer from the National Parks Board, who then passed it to the Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES) the same evening. The author returned to the same location the next day, but the pit-viper was no longer there.

**Remarks:** The ball python is native to Africa, and thus the featured individual was most likely an abandoned pet. This species is a widely kept and popular reptile (Bartlett, 2006: 63), and so established it is in the pet trade, that to date, more than 7,000 recognised colour morphs have been commercially produced from selective breeding. The one featured here seems to be a 'killer blast' (see World of Ball Pythons). In Singapore, however, snakes cannot be legally kept as pets (see Mohan & Mahmud, 2017).

The Wagler's pit-viper is native to Singapore's forests (Baker & Lim, 2012: 120), and it is not surprising to see one at the featured location. However, the featured individual, being found in close proximity to the ball python and on the ground, suggests that this may not have been a co-incidence. There is still a chance that it could also have been a former pet that was abandoned by the same person who had owned the python. The Wagler's pit-viper is strongly arboreal and it is unusual for one to be found at the edge of a drain. Nevertheless, individuals are known to descend to the ground to reach other plants and trees, and the author had found male snakes of this species squashed by vehicles along Old Upper Thomson Road.

### References:

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- World of Ball Pythons. The big morphlist [worldofballpythons.com/morphs/?]. Accessed on 27 June 2020.



Fig. 1. Dorso-lateral view of ball python at the drain.



Fig. 2. Dorso-lateral view of female Wagler's pit-viper at the drain.

Photographs by Nick Baker