

Speckle-bellied Keelback *Rhabdophis chrysargos* predation on Philippine Toad on Palawan Island, Philippines

Emerson Y. SY & Jason B. APOLONIO
emersonsy@gmail.com (Sy)

Observer: Jason B. Apolonio.
Photograph by: Jason B. Apolonio.
Subject identified by: Emerson Y. Sy.

Location: Barangay Pasadeña, Municipality of El Nido, Palawan Island, Philippines.
Elevation: 22 metres.
Habitat: Farmland near a stream.
Date and time: 30 July 2017, 15:24 hrs.

Identity of subjects:

- (i) Speckle-bellied Keelback, *Rhabdophis chrysargos* (Reptilia: Squamata: Natricidae).
- (ii) Philippine Toad, *Ingerophrynus philippinicus* (Amphibia: Anura: Bufonidae).

Description of record: A Speckle-bellied Keelback was observed swallowing, head first, a terrestrial frog in a farm. After being observed for approximately one minute, the snake hid under a pile of cut bamboos.



Fig. 1.

© Jason B. Apolonio

Remarks:

The Speckle-bellied Keelback was identified based on (i) greyish brown color, (ii) head distinct from neck, (iii) one preocular, (iv) three postoculars, (v) nine upper labials with fourth, fifth, and sixth in contact with the eye; seventh and eighth largest, and (vi) strongly keeled body scales (Taylor, 1922). The Philippine Toad was identified based on (i) uniform brown color and (ii) tubercles all over body and limbs (Alcala and Brown, 1998).

In the Philippines, the Speckle-bellied Keelback occurs in the Palawan faunal region including on the islands of Balabac, Busuanga, Calauit, Culion, and Palawan. It is often encountered near a body of water and its diet is known to include unidentified frogs and fishes (Taylor, 1922). This observation may be the first documentation of a clearly identified species of frog predated by this snake. Other frog species observed in the vicinity during fieldwork in 2017 were *Megophrys ligayae*, *Limnonectes acanthi*, *Staurois nubilus*, *Pulchrana moellendorffi*, and *Occidozyga laevis* (Sy & Apolonio, pers. obs.). It will not be surprising if most of these frogs are eventually recorded in the diet of *Rhabdophis chrysargos*.

References:

Alcala, A.C. and W.C. Brown. 1998. *Philippine Amphibians: An Illustrated Field Guide*. Bookmark, Inc., Makati City, Philippines. xii + 116 pp.

Taylor, E.H. (1922). *The Snakes Of The Philippine Islands*. Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources and Bureau of Science, Manila. 312 pp. + 37 plates.