

Predation of Variable Paradise Tree Snake (*Chrysopelea paradisi variabilis*) by a Giant Golden Orb Weaver on Catanduanes Island, Philippines

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Photograph by: Marvin Jay R. Sarmiento.

Subjects identified by: Emerson Y. Sy, Marvin Jay R. Sarmiento.

Location: Barangay Ibong Sapa, Municipality of Virac, Catanduanes Island, Catanduanes Province, Philippines.

Elevation: 80 metres.

Habitat: Secondary forest.

Date and time: 26 December 2017, 19:00 hrs.

Identity of subjects:

- (i) Variable Paradise Tree Snake, *Chrysopelea paradisi variabilis* (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae).
- (ii) Giant Golden Orb Weaver, *Nephila pilipes* (Arachnida: Araneae: Nephilidae).

Description of record: A live juvenile Variable Paradise Tree Snake was trapped on a spider web, while a female Giant Golden Orb Weaver was wrapping its head with silk. The snake was observed to struggle for approximately 45 minutes before it stopped moving altogether.

Remarks: The snake was identified as a juvenile *Chrysopelea paradisi variabilis* based on (i) dorsal body colour is black, (ii) white crossbars on the body and tail and (iii) reddish orange spots on white crossbars (Alcala, 1986). The spider was identified as a female *Nephila pilipes* based on (i) its large size, (ii) abdomen and legs are black with bright yellow spots and/or markings.

The Variable Paradise Tree Snake is an endemic taxon (Mertens, 1968) and has a widespread distribution in the Philippines (Alcala, 1986). This diurnal and arboreal snake is commonly encountered in coconut plantations (Sanguila et al., 2016) and has been observed to prey on lizards (e.g. *Lamprolepis smaragdina philippinica*, *Gekko gecko*) (Sy, unpubl. data). We suspect the snake landed accidentally on the web and was predated opportunistically by the spider.



Fig. 1.

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References:

Alcala, A.C. 1986. *Guide to Philippine flora and Fauna, Volume X. amphibians and reptiles*. Natural Resources Management Center and University of the Philippines, Quezon City, Philippines. xiv + 195 pp.

Mertens, R. 1968. Die Arten und Unterarten der Schmuckbaumschlangen (*Chrysopelea*). *Senckenbergiana Biologica* 49: 191-217.

Sanguila, M.B., Cobb, K.A., Siler, C.D., Diesmos, A.C., Alcala, A.C., and Brown, R.M. (2016). The amphibians and reptiles of Mindanao Island, southern Philippines, II: the herpetofauna of northeast Mindanao and adjacent islands. *ZooKey* 624: 1-132.