

Melanism in Northern Philippine Cobra *Naja philippinensis* from Isabela Province, Luzon Island, Philippines

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Observer: Jouel B. Taggug.
Photograph by: Jouel B. Taggug.
Subjects identified by: Emerson Y. Sy.

Location: Barangay San Juan, Municipality of Cabagan, Isabela Province, Luzon Island, Philippines.
Elevation: 49 metres.
Habitat: Agricultural land.
Date and time: 25 October 2017, 12:30 hrs.

Identity of subject: Northern Philippine Cobra, *Naja philippinensis* (Reptilia: Squamata: Elapidae).

Description of record: Two adult Northern Philippine Cobra exhibiting uniform dark grey colouration (Fig. 1) were found hiding underneath a pile of sacks and were subsequently killed by residents by striking the head and body with wooden sticks.

Remarks: The elapid snakes were identified as *Naja philippinensis* based on (i) loreal scale is absent (ii) three postoculars, (iii) one preocular, and (iv) 21 scale row at midbody (Taylor, 1922).

Naja philippinensis is a spitting cobra endemic to the Philippines which occurs on the following islands: Catanduanes, Lubang, Luzon, Mindoro, Marinduque and Masbate (Sy and Balete, 2017; Sy and Vargas, 2017). The typical dorsal body colour is uniform light brown to olive brown (Taylor, 1922; Leviton, 1965), but individuals exhibiting melanism from uncertain localities have been observed at a government wildlife rescue center (Sy, pers. obs.) and in captivity at the antivenom production facility of the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (A. Diesmos, pers. comm.). This note provides a locality of naturally occurring melanistic *Naja philippinensis*.



Fig. 1.

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References:

Leviton, A.E. 1965. Contribution to a review of Philippine snakes, VII. The snakes of the genera *Naja* and *Ophiophagus*. Philippine Journal of Science 93(4): 531-550.

Sy, E.Y. and D.S. Balete. 2017. Geographic distribution: *Naja philippinensis* (Northern Philippine Cobra): Philippines, Lubang Island. Herpetological Review 48(3): 590.

Sy, E.Y. and M.G. Vargas. 2017. Geographic distribution: *Naja philippinensis* (Northern Philippine Cobra): Philippines, Catanduanes Island. Herpetological Review 48(3): 590.

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.