

Green Crested Lizard *Bronchocela cristatella* predated by Palawan Hornbill on Lagen Island, Philippines

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Observer: Jaime Anne. L. Dichaves.
Photograph by: Jaime Anne. L. Dichaves.
Subject identified by: Emerson Y. Sy.

Location: Barangay Aberawan, Municipality of El Nido, Lagen Island, Palawan Province, Philippines.
Elevation: 48 metres
Habitat: Secondary forest.
Date and time: 21 March 2016, 14:00 hrs.

Identity of subjects:

- (i) Green Crested Lizard, *Bronchocela cristatella* (Reptilia: Squamata: Agamidae).
- (ii) Palawan Hornbill, *Anthracoseros marcheii* (Aves: Bucerotiformes: Bucerotidae).

Description of record: A female Palawan Hornbill foraging on the ground for fruits of *Alocasia* sp. (family Araceae) suddenly flew to a branch of a Variegated Fig (*Ficus variegata*) and caught an adult *Bronchocela cristatella* by the neck (Fig. 1). It took the bird less than 10 seconds to swallow head first the entire body of the prey and an additional 10 minutes or so to completely swallow the long tail of the lizard.



Fig. 1.

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Remarks: The agamid lizard consumed by the hornbill is identified as *Bronchocela cristatella* based on (i) overall greenish colour, (ii) long tail more than 2.5 times snout-vent length (this was observed, but is not fully visible in the selected photograph). A closely-related species of similar appearance, *Bronchocela marmorata*, appears not to have been recorded on the island of Palawan, but is known from the neighbouring islands of Negros, Panay and Mindoro (Diong & Lim, 1998).

Bronchocela cristatella is a conspicuous, diurnal, arboreal, and moderate-sized (snout-vent length = 83–120 mm) agamid with widespread, although fragmented, distribution in Asia and the Philippines (Diong & Lim, 1998; Grismer et al., 2015).

While the Palawan Hornbill is primarily a frugivorous bird, it has been noted to prey on unidentified lizards (Gonzales & Rees, 1988). More recently, *Lamprolepis smaragdina* (Emerald Tree Skink) was identified as a prey item of the Palawan Hornbill (Widmann et al., 2015). Lizards may be an important source of protein for hornbills particularly during breeding and nesting season. To our knowledge, this is the second known lizard species in the diet of the Palawan Hornbill.

References:

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- Grismer, L.L., Wood, P.L. Jr., Lee, C.H., Quah, E.S.H., Anuar, S., Ngadi, E. & Sites, J.W. Jr. (2015). An integrative taxonomic review of the agamid genus *Bronchocela* (Kuhl, 1820) from Peninsular Malaysia with descriptions of new montane and insular endemics. *Zootaxa* 3948(1): 1–23.
- Widmann, P., Widmann, I.L., Plazos, M.F. & Antonio, R. (2015). Aspects of breeding biology and conservation of the Palawan Hornbill *Anthracoceros marchei* in the Palawan faunal region, Philippines. *Malayan Nature Journal* 67(2): 130-143.