

First record of King Cobra and Leviton's Bronzeback (*Dendrelaphis levitoni*) on North Guntao Island, Palawan Province, Philippines

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Subjects identified by: Emerson Y. Sy.

Location: North Guntao Island, Municipality of El Nido, Palawan Province, Philippines.

Elevation: 1 metre.

Habitat: Sandy beach, 5 metres from the shore.

Date and time: 05 May 2018, 10:00 hrs.

Identity of subjects:

(i) King Cobra, *Ophiophagus hannah* (Reptilia: Squamata: Elapidae).

(ii) Leviton's Bronzeback, *Dendrelaphis levitoni* (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae).

Description of record: A juvenile King Cobra, estimated 1.5 metres in total length, was observed in the process of swallowing a snake prey, later identified as Leviton's Bronzeback. As the observers approached the King Cobra, it regurgitated its prey (Fig. 2) and assumed a defensive posture.



Fig. 1.

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Fig. 2.

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Remarks: The King Cobra was identified based on (i) dorsal body colour is olive brown, (ii) large parietal and occipital scales, (iii) loreal scale is absent, (iv) one preocular, (v) three postoculars and (vi) seven upper labials with third and fourth in contact with the eye (Fig. 1) (Taylor, 1922). Leviton's Bronzeback was identified based on (i) black longitudinal stripes on the body (ii) a black postocular stripe, (iii) bluish tinge on ventral scales, and (iv) reddish orange pigmentation on the neck (Fig. 2) (Van Rooijen & Vogel, 2012; Sy, unpubl. data).

The King Cobra has a widespread distribution from South Asia to Southeast Asia (Das, 2002). In the Philippines, King Cobra has been documented on large and small islands (e.g. Pangulasian, Romblon, this paper) (Sy & Wallbank, 2013; Sy & Dichaves, 2017). While it is a well-known ophiophagous snake, in the Philippines the King Cobra has also been documented to prey on an endemic varanid, the Yellow-headed Water Monitor (Cuming's Water Monitor) *Varanus cumingi* (Siler *et al.*, 2011).

Leviton's Bronzeback is endemic to the Palawan faunal region and occurs on Balabac, Cadaraman, and Palawan (Van Rooijen & Vogel, 2012). This paper provides new distributional record for both snakes.

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