

Red-tailed Green Ratsnake *Gonyosoma oxycephalum* predation on White-bellied Woodpecker in the Philippines

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Observer: Allan Gil S. Fernando.
Photograph by: Allan Gil S. Fernando.
Subjects identified by: Allan Gil S. Fernando, Emerson Y. Sy.

Location: : Nabasan Trail, Municipality of Subic, Zambales Province, Luzon Island, Philippines.
Elevation: 40 metres.
Habitat: Lowland secondary forest.
Date and time: 26 January 2019, 10:14 hrs.

Identity of subjects:

- i) Red-tailed Green Ratsnake, *Gonyosoma oxycephalum* (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae).
- ii) White-bellied Woodpecker, *Dryocopus javensis* (Aves: Piciformes: Picidae)

Description of record: A green snake was observed hanging from a horizontal branch approximately three meters above the ground, whilst constricting a White-bellied Woodpecker. Another White-bellied Woodpecker nearby was making non-stop alarm calls. The bird ceased struggling after three minutes and the snake started its attempt to swallow it head first.

The snake was able to swallow the head of the bird, but regurgitated it after a few minutes. It made another attempt to swallow the bird, but this was also unsuccessful. The two swallowing attempts lasted for 17 minutes. Observation was discontinued immediately after the second regurgitation, thus the actual consumption of the bird by the snake was not observed.

Remarks: The snake was identified as *Gonyosoma oxycephalum* based on (i) uniform green colour, (ii) tail is light reddish brown colour and (iii) head is elongated and distinct from the neck (Taylor, 1922).

The bird was identified as *Dryocopus javensis* based on (i) back and tail are black in colour, (ii) face and throat are black with white streaks, (iii) crown, crest, and malar stripe are scarlet red, and (iv) abdomen is yellowish white (Kennedy et al., 2000).



Fig. 1.

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The Red-tailed Green Ratsnake has a wide distributional range in Southeast Asia, including Andaman Islands. The snake occurs in the Philippines on the islands of Balabac, Batan, Bohol, Bongao, Calayan, Camiguin Norte, Dinagat, Leyte, Lubang, Luzon, Marinduque, Mindanao, Negros, Palawan, Panay, Sabtang and Sibuyan (Sy & Tan, 2013; Leviton et al., 2018) and predated on unidentified birds, lizards, and small mammals (rodents, bats) (Taylor, 1922; Gaulke, 2011). The snake is reputed to capture bird prey in mid-air. This note possibly provides the first identified bird in the diet of the Red-tailed Green Ratsnake in the Philippines.

References:

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