

First record of King Cobra *Ophiophagus hannah* predation on Samar Water Monitor Lizard *Varanus samarensis* on Bohol Island, Philippines

Emerson Y. SY
emersonsy@gmail.com

Observer: Marjun Silmaro.
Photograph by: Marjun Silmaro.
Subjects identified by: Emerson Y. Sy.

Location: Bohol Island, Barangay Danikop, Municipality of Sierra Bullones, Bohol Province, Philippines.
Elevation: 316 metres ASL.
Habitat: Coconut and bamboo plantation adjacent to a stream.
Date and time: 02 October 2021, 09:15 hrs.

Identity of subjects:

- (i) King Cobra, *Ophiophagus hannah* (Reptilia: Squamata: Serpentes: Elapidae).
- (ii) Samar Water Monitor Lizard, *Varanus samarensis* (Reptilia: Squamata: Sauria: Varanidae)

Description of record:

A snake was observed swallowing a monitor lizard head first, in a coconut and bamboo plantation. A resident hit the snake around the neck region with a jungle *bolo* (a long, heavy, single-edged knife) to kill it and pulled out the dead monitor lizard (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1.

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Remarks:

The snake was identified as *Ophiophagus hannah* based on (i) loreal scale is absent, (ii) a large pair of occipital scales behind parietal scales, (iii) one preocular, (iv) three postoculars, and (v) colour of dorsal head and body is uniform dark grey with light diagonal markings at midbody (Taylor, 1920; Sy, unpubl. data). The monitor lizard was identified as *Varanus samarensis* based on (i) dorsal colour of head, body, limbs, and tail is predominantly black, (ii) transverse rows of distinct pale yellow spots and ocelli, (iii) limbs with yellow dots, and (iv) tail with transverse pale yellow bands (Auliya & Koch, 2020).

The King Cobra has a widespread distribution and is known to occur in all major faunal regions in the Philippines (e.g. Gaulke, 2011 [Western Visayas]; Leviton, 1965 [Sulu Archipelago]; Sy, 2016 [Mindanao], Taylor, 1922 [Luzon, Palawan]). Although the King Cobra is predominantly ophiophagous, it has been documented to predate on the Mindanao Water Monitor Lizard *Varanus cumingi* on Mindanao Island (Siler et al., 2011) and on the Palawan Water Monitor Lizard *Varanus palawanensis* on Miniloc Island/Palawan faunal region (Sy & Ong, 2019). This note provides the first record of King Cobra predation on the Samar Water Monitor Lizard.

References:

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- 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.