

King Cobra *Ophiophagus hannah* on Jolo Island, Philippines

Emerson Y. SY & Mherson A. BUTLANGAN
emersonsy@gmail.com

Observer: Mherson A. Butlangan.

Photographs by: Mherson A. Butlangan.

Subject identified by: Emerson Y. Sy.

Location: Jolo Island, Barangay Pasil, Indanan Municipality, Sulu Province, Philippines.

Elevation: ca. 220 metres ASL.

Habitat: Coconut plantation adjacent to a stream.

Date and time: 06 February 2022, 09:30 hrs.

Identity of subject:

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

Description of record:

A large snake (Figs 1 and 2), approximately 244 cm in total length, was observed on a pile of coconut husks adjacent to a stream. Residents in the area used long wooden and bamboo poles with nylon noose to catch the snake.



Fig. 1. Front view, with hood expanded.

© M.A. Butlangan



Fig. 2. Rear view, showing the patterning on the expanded hood.

© M.A. Butlangan

Remarks:

The snake was identified as *Ophiophagus hannah* based on (i) loreal scale is absent, (ii) large parietal and occipital scales, (iii) one preocular, (iv) three postoculars, (v) colour of dorsal head and nape is medium brown with prominent light chevron markings (Taylor, 1922).

The first record of King Cobra on Jolo Island was based on specimen SU 13327 (Stanford University, USA), but without exact locality data (Leviton, 1965). King Cobras are usually killed when encountered by humans in the Philippines. A review of posts on a social media platform documented at least 499 King Cobras killed throughout the Philippines from 2019–2021. (Sy, unpubl. data). This note provides the first record of the species on Jolo with exact locality data and colour photographs of a live individual.

References:

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