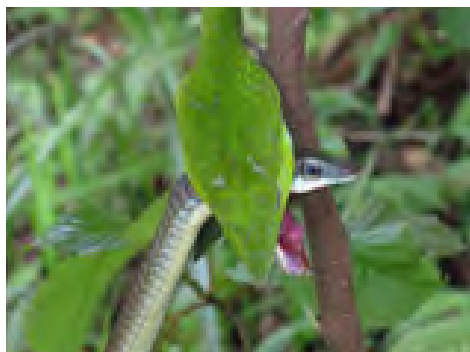




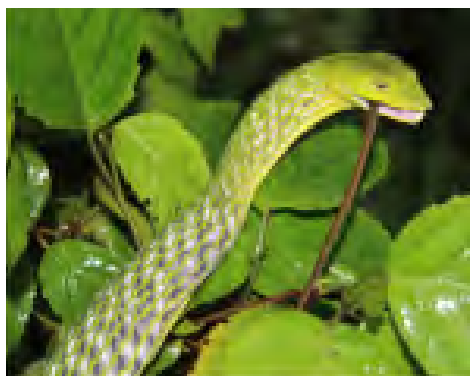
Predation on Large-eyed Bronzeback Tree Snake *Dendrelaphis grandoculis* by the Common Vine Snake *Ahaetulla nasuta* at Silent Valley National Park, Kerala



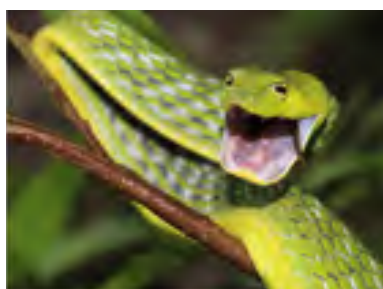
IUCN Red List:

Global – NA

Regional
Peninsular India - LC
(Srinivasulu et al. 2014)



Sequential photos of predation on Large-eyed Bronzeback Tree Snake *Dendrelaphis grandoculis* by the Common Vine Snake *Ahaetulla nasuta*



On 27 July 2011, at 11.40am, on our way to field survey at Sairandri (11°5.22'N & 76°27.24'E), Silent Valley National Park, Palakkad District, Kerala, we noticed a Common Vine Snake (predator) about to catch snake (prey) from a Wild Berry *Maesa indica* plant, at about 1.5m height, near the forest road. The fully grown Common Vine Snake was about the height of the plant, approximately 1.5m in length. The first attack was on back of prey's head. The prey was struggling and whipping all along the bush but the firm grip of the snake was very firm, and continued for about two hours to narcotize the prey, later the predator

Reptilia
[Class of Reptiles]

Squamata
[Order of Scaled Reptiles]

Colubridae
[Family of Snakes]



loosened its grip. It started swallowing the prey from its head first and took more than 40 minutes to engulf it. Then after about 5 minutes of rest, the predator tried to climb on a nearby *Glochidion ellipticum* tree but failed may be due to the weight of the prey inside. Then it climbed on another Berry plant nearby, which it could manage. The entire episode was being watched by two smaller Vine snakes near the scene. The entire incident lasted for about 2 hours and 40 minutes. All the behavioural sequences were photographed. Later, from the photographs and the scalation data the prey species was identified it as Large-eyed Bronze back Tree Snake.

The Common Vine Snake is one of the commonest arboreal snakes found in the well-wooded areas frequenting trees and bushes, from the plains to hills up to 1,800m. The species is distributed to peninsular part of India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the northern part of mainland of Southeast Asia including Myanmar and Thailand. It is a mildly venomous snake and the venom is capable of paralyzing small preys. The snake feeds mainly on lizards, frogs and birds, and occasionally on snakes, smaller mammals (Das 2002; Daniel 2002; Sharma 2007). Whitaker & Captain (2004) reported that it feeds on Uropeltid snakes. Tadpoles have also been recorded in the diet of this species (Kunte 1998). The habit of catching fishes was also recorded from Sri Lanka (Whitaker & Captain 2004). The Large-eyed Bronzeback Tree Snake is an arboreal slow-moving snake found mainly in the well wooded areas of the hills. The species is endemic to the wet forests in lower hills of southern Western Ghats (Whitaker & Captian 2004). It is already listed in the reptilian checklist published for the Silent Valley National Park (Murthy 1981, 1986; Thomas & Easa 1997; Whitaker & Martin 1999)

Although, Vine snakes are known to feed on smaller snakes, the detailed documentation of predation events and species predated are rare. The present observation of predation of larger snakes by Vine Snakes, of about its size, is for the first time. Since both the individuals are of the same size, there is all chance Large-eyed Bronzeback Tree Snake to escape this predation. Being slightly venomous Vine Snake overpowers the prey in spite of the almost their equal sizes. It is also interesting to note that out of the total time taken for predation, it took almost two hours to paralyze the prey.

**The Large-eyed
Bronzeback Tree
Snake took almost
two hours to
paralyze the prey**



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