



Notes on a Road-killed Red Bamboo Snake, *Oreocryptophis porphyraceus* (Cantor 1839), in Hong Kong

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The Red Bamboo Snake (*Oreocryptophis porphyraceus*) is a medium-sized, diurnally active colubrid widely distributed in eastern, southern, and southeastern Asia (Liu et al.

2012; Uetz et al. 2023). The species is known from forest and adjacent areas but appears to prefer forested habitats (Zhao et al. 1998; Das 2016). Despite its wide distribution, little



Figure 1. Road-killed male Red Bamboo Snake (*Oreocryptophis porphyraceus vaillanti*) at Kei Ling Ha Lo Wai, Sai Kung, Hong Kong. Photographs by B.P.L. Chan.

has been written about its intraspecific taxonomy, and even less on its ecology. Many subspecies have been proposed for this wide-ranging species, and the Hong Kong population has long been allocated to *O. p. nigrofasciata* since first reported in 1943 (Karsen et al. 1998). A recent morphological study on Chinese populations suggested that populations from coastal southern China should be assigned to *O. p. vaillanti* (Wang et al. 2019). In Hong Kong, *O. porphyraceus* is uncommonly recorded due to its secretive behavior, and both natural history and ecological information on the taxon is scarce (Karsen et al. 1998).

At approximately 0850 h on 13 April 2022, BPLC found a recently roadkilled *O. p. vaillanti* near Kei Ling Ha Lo Wai Village, Sai Kung District, New Territories, Hong Kong S.A.R. (22.406944, 114.278056) (Fig. 1). The specimen was found at 50 m asl about 400 m from the shore on a 4 m-wide paved road that runs down a steep hillside covered by a mosaic of shrubland and secondary forest. BPLC passed this road section at 0800 when the specimen was clearly not present, indicating that the species is diurnally active in Hong Kong, which concurs with published sources elsewhere (Liu et al. 2012).

The subadult male (SVL = 59.5 cm, total length = 73.2 cm) was photographed, collected, and deposited in the Herpetological Collection of Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden (KFBG), Hong Kong, under voucher number KFBG 14635. Pholidosis and color pattern matched the description of *O. p. vaillanti*, particularly the presence of black flank stripes along the entire body and the median black head stripe not extending beyond the posterior edge of the parietals (Wang et al. 2019).

Roadkilled *O. porphyraceus* have been reported from Hong Kong, Thailand, and Taiwan (Karsen et al. 1998; Kummoo 2020; Lin 2022). Roads dissecting natural habitats force animals to cross these hazardous artificial linear structures to search for mates and to locate critical resources (Smith 2003). Previous studies indicated that road mortality was one of the leading causes for the decline of certain reptilian species, especially those occupying human-modified habitats (Gibbons et al. 2000; Andrews et al. 2015). In a megacity like Hong Kong, roadkilled wildlife is common but has been

documented by only a few studies (Ridley 2001; Pei et al. 2010).

To the best of our knowledge, this record represents the first report of the species from Sai Kung District (Karsen et al. 1998) and the lowest elevation reported for the species in mainland China (the lowest previous report was 200 m asl; Zhao et al. 1998).

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