



# Use of Cave Habitat by a Philippine Ratsnake, *Coelognathus philippinus* (Griffin 1909), in Igang Cave, Tabon Cave Complex, Quezon, Palawan, Philippines

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We encountered a Philippine Ratsnake, also known as the Palawan Ratsnake (*Coelognathus philippinus*) (SVL ~120 cm), about 2.6 m above the substrate in the ceiling of the right subchamber of Igang Cave, Tabon Cave Complex, Quezon, Palawan, Philippines (elev. ~36 m asl). Taylor (1922) reported that *C. philippinus* preys primarily on birds and small mammals and these snakes also are known to occasionally prey on lizards (Schulz 1996; Huang et al. 2008; Tan and Sy 2023). We presumed that the snake was in position to intercept potential prey (e.g., insectivorous bats, swiftlets,

and swallows). After taking photographs, we left it unharmed where initially observed.

This species is endemic to the Philippines, with populations primarily distributed across mainland Palawan and its associated island municipalities, as well as in Sanga-Sanga, Bongao, and Sibutu in Tawi-Tawi (Gaulke 1994; Sy 2023). Caves provide critical habitats for various vertebrate species in the form of denning sites, roosting locations, and sites for predation or foraging (Strong and Goodbar 2005; Nuñez and Gallorio 2015). The use of cave habitat by the closely related



**Figure 1.** A Philippine Ratsnake (*Coelognathus philippinus*) found in a cave near Balabac, Palawan, Philippines. Photograph by Marvin Jay R. Sarmiento.

*Coelognathus erythrurus manillensis* was documented in Luzon by Dela Cruz et al. (2018) and, although *C. philippinus* is frequently observed within the perimeter of the Tabon Cave Complex, this represents the first documented account of its use of cave habitats.

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