

# Predation on the Common Blind Snake (*Indotyphlops braminus*; Daudin, 1803) by the Brown-headed Snake (*Furina tristis*; Günther, 1858) in Central Province, Papua New Guinea.

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The brown-headed snake, *Furina tristis* (Günther, 1858), is a medium-sized (<1 m) nocturnal and terrestrial member of the elapid family with a distribution that encompasses Northern Australia, Torres Strait Islands, and Papua New Guinea. It is a secretive spe-

cies that occupies primary and secondary forests as well as highly-disturbed areas including plantations and the surroundings of human settlements. *F.tristis* is known to feed primarily on lizards (O'Shea, 1996), with a single record of ophiophagy reported from Queensland,



**Figure 1.** Deceased juvenile male *Furina tristis* with two ingested *Indotyphlops braminus*, one of which was found to contain three eggs (Photo: Tom Charlton)

Australia consisting of a predation attempt on the Torres Straits blind snake, *Anilius torresianus* (Lettoof & Natusch, 2015). Here we report the first known case of *F. tristis* predating on the common blind snake, *Indotyphlops braminus* (Daudin, 1803).

On 8 November 2018 an examination took place of a recently deceased juvenile male *F. tristis* (SVL 486mm, weight 26 grams) (Fig 1). The snake had been collected the previous day at 14:00 h within the vicinity of Lea Lea village of Central Province, Papua New Guinea, after it was found deceased on a road. It was presumably hit by motor vehicle though no obvious signs of injury to the snake were present. The surrounding habitats consisted of open grassland, isolated pandanus groves and saltmarsh, along with several blocks of commercial warehouse buildings. Dissection revealed that the collected specimen had recently consumed two adult blind snakes, confirmed as *Indotyphlops braminus* (common blind snake). One of the specimens retrieved during the examination measured 162 mm and contained three eggs; the other measured 140 mm. No further evidence of prey items were discovered within the stomach contents. *I. braminus* is an all-female species that was introduced to the island of New Guinea from Asia (O'Shea 1996) and has since become well established, reproducing through parthenogenesis.

Although *F. tristis* has previously been recorded to predate on blind snakes, to our knowledge this is the

first known record of predation by this species on *I. braminus*. We would like to thank Mark O'Shea for his assistance with identification of the blind snakes.

## References

O'Shea (1996). A Guide to the Snakes of Papua New Guinea. Independent Publishing Limited, Port Moresby, PNG. 152-153.

Lettoof, Damian and Daniel Natusch. 2015. *Furina tristis* (brown-headed snake) diet. Herpetological Review. 46(4): 644.