

## First record of King Cobra *Ophiophagus hannah* in Surigao del Norte, Mindanao Island, Philippines

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**Observer:** Mark Gregory Q. Rule.  
**Photograph by:** Mark Gregory Q. Rule.  
**Subject identified by:** Mark Gregory Q. Rule & Emerson Y. Sy.

**Location:** Mindanao Island, Barangay Cabugo, Municipality of Claver, Surigao del Norte Province, Philippines.  
**Elevation:** 116 metres ASL.  
**Habitat:** Remnant lowland forests along stream.  
**Date and time:** 27 January 2021, 11:30 hrs.

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

**Description of record:** A King Cobra, approximately two metres in total length, was observed slithering along a forest trail and crossing a stream (Fig. 1). The observer also noted its excellent swimming ability as it moved effortlessly against the stream current (Fig. 2).

### Remarks:

Locally known as 'Banakon', the snake was identified as *Ophiophagus hannah* based on (i) olive brown dorsal body colour, (ii) pale yellow ventral colour, (iii) large parietal and occipital scales with black edges, (iv) loreal scale is absent, (v) one preocular scale, and (vi) three postocular scales (Taylor, 1922).



Fig. 1.

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Fig. 2.

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The King Cobra has a widespread distribution in the Philippines and is known to occur on Mindanao in the following provinces: Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Oriental, Sarangani, South Cotabato, and Zamboanga del Norte (Sy, 2016). The Municipality of Claver is situated at the northeastern portion of Mindanao Island and is the largest municipality in the province of Surigao del Norte. While locals have reported encounters with this species, there is no published record of the occurrence of *Ophiophagus hannah* in the province. This record provides the first record for the province and fills the distribution gap in northeastern Mindanao.

#### References:

- Sy, E.Y. (2016). Geographic distribution: *Ophiophagus hannah* (King Cobra): Philippines, Mindanao Island, Zamboanga del Norte Province. *Herpetological Review* 47(2): 264.
- 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.