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AN OBSERVATION OF DAY-NIGHT ACTIVITY IN WAGLER'S PITVIPER *TROPIDOLAEMUS WAGLERI* (WAGLER, 1830)

J. Lindley McKay

ABSTRACT

A juvenile *Tropidolaemus wagleri* was observed in one position, moving less than two metres, over six days and five nights, in Bako National Park, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Wagler's pitviper is a widespread species in south-east Asia, occurring in southern Thailand, Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore, Sumatra, Borneo, the Philippines, Sulawesi and nearby smaller islands. Often cited as common, or the commonest of sympatric viperids, it ranges from sea level up to 1500 m above sea level (Sabah Parks museum specimen 04024), including disturbed habitats. Despite this, information on its ecology is scarce, likely due to the difficulty of finding and observing snakes in their natural habitat and their often cryptic lifestyles, including long periods of inactivity, and is limited in this species to two papers by Lidth de Jeude. In 1886, Lidth de Jeude documented the occurrence of ontogenetic colour change, and in 1890 recorded an individual exhibiting extremely sedentary behaviour over a period of two weeks.

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Some ecological information can be inferred from experience with captive animals. Typical viperid courtship of jerky body movements, pronounced activity and pursuit of females has been observed (Vogel 1991). Captive juveniles have displayed cannibalism (Bridegam *et al.* 1990) and an apparent ability to wet the skin with only the tail tip actually submerged (Vogel 1991); and newborn litters occasionally show sexual dichromatism (Card 1994).