

The Sarawak Museum Journal

Vol. LV No. 76

December 2000



ISSN: 0375-3050

E-ISSN: 3036-0188

Citation: Anke Maria Hofer and Mark Auliya. (2000). Observations on Abundance and Diet of the Sunbeam Snake *Xenopeltis Unicolor* in West Kalimantan, Indonesia. The Sarawak Museum Journal, LV (76): 255-258

OBSERVATIONS ON ABUNDANCE AND DIET OF THE SUNBEAM SNAKE *XENOPELTIS UNICOLOR* IN WEST KALIMANTAN, INDONESIA

Anke Maria Hofer and Mark Auliya

The Sunbeam Snake is a non-venomous, nocturnal, ground dwelling snake which is distributed throughout Southeast Asia, reaching Nicobars and Myanmar in the west, and the Philippines in the east. Within Indonesia, the species is abundant in Sulawesi and the Greater Sundas (Sumatra, Java & Borneo), but not on the Lesser Sundas (Brongersma 1934; Saint-Girons 1972; Manthey & Grossmann 1997).

The english name "Sunbeam Snake" refers to the highly iridescent scales, which reflect the spectrum light colors (Lim & Lee 1989) whereas the latin name "*unicolor*" describes its uniform dark to black-brownish color in the shade (Van Hoesel 1959). Various publications about *Xenopeltis unicolor*, mainly focus on the taxonomic status within the monotypic family *Xenopeltidae*, with hypothesis supported by the morphology of the skull and the head pholidosis (Mertens 1943; Lim & Lee 1989). This note contains observations on its diet and abundance in West Kalimantan, Indonesia.

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by

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In 1996 a field survey was carried out in West Kalimantan, Indonesia, during which the herpetofaunal community was examined. Specimens of *X. unicolor* were collected in the capital Pontianak [0°05'S; 109°16'E] and in Putussibau [0°52'N; 112°55'E]. All specimens represented road kills and were exclusively found during the main wet season, beginning in June and continuously increasing with a peak in November 1996 (Table 1). Two additional specimens were captured September 5th and December 9th, in Putussibau and approximately 5 hours by boat south of Putussibau, respectively and later released.