

## A CASE OF PREDATION ON *COLUBER RUBRICEPS* BY A SMYRNA KINGFISHER IN ISRAEL

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On 30 May 1992, at 5.45 am, a small group of 7th grade school-children and the author witnessed a case of predation on a snake by a Smyrna or White-breasted kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* (Linnaeus, 1758) in Kibbutz Netzer Sereni, Israel. While waiting for a bus near the back of the communal dining-room a Kingfisher landed on a low-tension powerline some ten meters from the group. The arrival of the Kingfisher did not cause a sensation because the lines are in daily use as a perch for a pair of those birds. It was just the fact that a wrigling snake was dangling from its bill that caused a near commotion.

In order to calm down the movements of the snake, the Kingfisher knocked it several times with considerable force against the powerline. This was followed by swallowing the snake head first. This whole event lasted about two minutes, then the bird flew away with the tail of the snake still dangling out of its bill.

This event happened so close by that it was possible to recognize the victim as a Red-headed whip snake *Coluber rubriceps* (Venzmer, 1919), with a total length of about 25-30 cm.

Although snakes are included in the list of prey taken by Smyrna kingfishers in Israel (Paz, 1987: 162), the only specific records of predation on snakes are those by mienis (1980: 135) and Eshbol (1983: 146 and text-fig.) Both authors described a case of predation on the Diced watersnake *Natrix tessellata* (Laurenti, 1768).

Since the author has witnessed now two cases of predation on diurnal snakes by this Kingfisher in a time span of twelve years, this bird is most probably more often feeding on snakes than has presumed so far. Other records may therefore be expected in the future.

### REFERENCES

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