Golden Tree Snake – One of Thailand’s Most Common

A reader wrote in to have a snake identified — and he sent an awesome photo that I wanted to share. The snake is a very common tree snake, called a Golden Tree Snake. They are excellent climbers and you’ll see them on palm trees, and in the ceilings of houses and bungalows — often. They have a strange skill. When they jump from a high tree — they can glide horizontally through the air — and land unharmed. They are sometimes called a “Flying Snake”.

These snakes are common, but, uncommonly fast. They are super-fast, whether on the ground in brush, or climbing something. They are excellent climbers and you won’t believe how fast they can climb.

Anyway — here is some information about this snake submitted by the copyright owner of this image — Kim Briers.

Dear,

Hope you can help me identify next snake...It looks a bit like a green tree snake but I didn’t wanna take any risks handling it...shame as i wanted to make a picture with some green background...

1. Location in Thailand – city, area the snake was seen

KOH YAO YAI


It was hiding inside a lantern of the hotel resort. We lifted the lantern and it came out really very fast and move up the table.
3. Estimate snake length and girth (thickness) of snake – was it thick as your finger? Arm? Calf? Thigh?

About 1 meter in length – girth, about 4cm

4. Found during night or daylight? What time?

Around 9.30 am at breakfast

5. If no photo is sent by email please describe the colors of the snake, patterns, anything you can remember.

6. Did the snake attempt to strike at you?

Not really but it was in strike position and could jump pretty well and was really fast. I was hoping it would move in a tree or so to make a nice natural shot but it was so so fast and disappeared under some stones…

Paradise Tree Snake
(Chrysopelea paradisi) –
Mildly Venomous – Not Dangerous

This one tried to bite many times and calmed after 10 minutes.

[Last Updated: 29 April 2017]

These are great snakes for a couple of reasons. Number 1 – their colors. This snake looks like Christmas – right? Amazing oranges, greens, and blacks make it very unique.
Number 2? They fly. Well, they glide very far when they jump from a high vantage point. They can glide dozens of meters – and probably more. These snakes are limited only by how high they are when they jump. Typically they use their gliding ability to travel from tree to tree in search of prey, or to elude capture by a predator.

**Name:** *Chrysopelea paradisi.* Paradise Tree Snake. Also called “Paradise flying snake.”

**Length:** As long as 1.2 meters (almost 4 feet)

**Appearance:** Very similar in all aspects to *C. ornata* with the exception of scale coloration. *C. paradisi* has black scales on the neck and body which have a green or yellow dot in the center of each scale. Scales on the dorsal near the vertebral column may have an orange or reddish coloration. Some call this the flower pattern. Great variation occurs as to how much orange is evident on the dorsal area – some have on the head, and completely down the body to the tail. Others have some orange on the head and a little bit on the neck, and none of the rest of the body.

**Range:** Thailand-wide. This one was found in Krabi province at sea-level in a handbag shop at the beach. We’ve found them in rainforest near a Thailand resort as well.

**Habitat:** Bushes, ground, trees, roofs. They are often found in palm tree fronds. I have found them there as well as small trees with big leaves and a lot of open area so they can see – presumably. I have found them as high as 500 meters vertically up a mountain in Thailand, and at sea level. Recently we found one 7 meters up a large tree on a hot sunny day.

**Active Time?** Diurnal – active during the day in trees and bushes, and occasionally on the ground.
**Food:** House geckos, Tokay geckos, lizards, bats, and frogs.

**Defensive Behavior:** They bite very quickly, but have small mouths and teeth. There has been no medically significant case of envenomation mentioned in the literature. They are considered harmless for humans and probably pets over the size of a cat.

**Venom Toxicity:** Weak for humans. Effective for geckos, frogs and bats. These are rear-fanged colubrids and a prolonged bite could cause swelling and pain at the bite site.

**Offspring:** They produce eggs which hatch during May/June in Thailand.

**Notes:** *C. Paradisi* is distinguished from *C. ornata* by the orange/red coloration at the top of the body, sometimes at the head, sometimes more of the body is colored, and sometimes the entire head and body are covered in the red flower like scale patterns.

Paradise Tree Snake – Not Dangerous – Just Beautiful

This paradise tree snake was caught grabbing gecko lunch in Singapore by David Joseph. Copyright 2011 – David Joseph. Used with permission.
Paradise tree snake eating a gecko. Copyright 2017 Sabri Abdullah and used with permission.

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Reptilia
Order: Squamata
Suborder: Serpentes
Family: Colubridae
Subfamily: Colubrinae
Genus: Chrysopelea
Species: C. paradisi
Binomial name – Chrysopelea paradisi
Classified by Boie, in the year 1827

Video of C. paradisi found 5/23/13: