

**TRIMERESURUS INSULARIS (White-lipped Island Pit Viper).**

**TERRESTRIALITY.** *Trimeresurus insularis* is an arboreal viper known from nearly every major island of the Lesser Sunda archipelago of Indonesia and Timor-Leste (Uetz et al. 2022. The Reptile Database. [www.reptile-database.org](http://www.reptile-database.org), 15 Oct 2022). It is arboreal in nature, inhabiting vegetation up to ca. 15 m high (Das 2010. Reptiles of South-east Asia. New Holland Publishers, London, UK. 376 pp.), and is found in natural forests, disturbed forests, bamboo forests, monocultures, and home gardens up to 1200 m elevation (Mertens 1930. Abh Senck Naturf Ges 42:117–344).

The species is common at Komodo National Park in Indonesia (Somaweera et al. 2018. Amphibians and Reptiles of Komodo National Park. National Park Authority. 31 pp). While specimens are mostly found on shrubs and trees in riparian habitats within monsoon forests (de Lang 2011. The Snakes of the Lesser Sunda



FIG. 1. *Trimeresurus insularis* in-situ on the ground at Padar Island, Komodo National Park, Indonesia.

Islands, Indonesia. Edition Chimaira, Germany. 359 pp), few specimens have been found among dense strands of tufted grasses (*Andropogon* spp.) at the edge of savanna habitats on Komodo Island (Auffenberg 1980. Bull. Florida State Mus. Biol. Sci. 25:39–156).

While on a recreational nighttime visit (1900–2130 h) to Padar Island on 4 October 2022, we encountered 14 specimens of *T. insularis* within an area of roughly 0.4 km<sup>2</sup> (centered around 8.65963°S, 119.55680°E; WGS 84). Of these, two were of the blue color morph and were found in *Tamarindus indica* trees, and the rest of green color morph. Of the 12 green individuals, eight were located on the ground, all fully or partially coiled and in ambush posture. Four were within 1–2 m from well-spaced trees and were facing the trunk of the tree (Fig. 1A). The other four were in the open grassland, two at the base of grass clumps (Fig. 1B), and two at the edge of a pile of abandoned wooden planks (Fig. 1C). There were no large trees within at least 10 m from these respective locations. All individuals were adults with an estimated SVL of over 25 cm. None attempted to move or escape when first approached. Based on opportunistic observational records by the rangers at the national park, it is common to encounter *T. insularis* on the ground at Padar, but not at the two other larger islands of the park- Komodo and Rinca.

While this species occasionally perches near to the ground suspended from vegetation (Reily et al. 2016. Herpetol. Rev. 47:318–319.) and can be found actively foraging among ground vegetation near streams in Bali, repeated visits to Komodo and Rinca islands over eight years have not resulted in any specimens on the ground. Compared to the larger Komodo and Rinca islands, Padar has much drier conditions and very sparse vegetation with the vast majority of the island covered in short grass savannah. Therefore, it is likely that the population of *T. insularis* is adapted to a more terrestrial mode of foraging. Like many other pitvipers, *T. insularis* appears to be an opportunistic feeder and is known to take terrestrial prey (Reily et al. 2016, *op. cit.*). The orientation of heads towards the tree trunks is likely to ambush lizards climbing on and off the trees. These observations expand the ecological niche of this widespread species.

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