

# Can some snakes do cartwheels to escape or startle predators?

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In research published in *Biotropica*, investigators report that the Dwarf Reed Snake (*Pseudorabdion longiceps*) performs cartwheels when threatened. This is the first time such an active rolling motion has been

documented in snakes, with images and a detailed description.

The Dwarf Reed Snake is a nocturnal, small snake that lives in regions of Southeast Asia. Typical defense mechanisms that small [snakes](#) use against predators include fleeing, camouflage, coloration, odors, death-feigning, and intimidation. Some snakes also use passive rolling, but investigators have observed that the Dwarf Reed Snake performs active cartwheeling by repeatedly launching the coils of its body into the air and rolling down inclines.

In addition to identifying a complex defense mechanism used by the Dwarf Reed Snake, the findings also provide insights into the kinetic abilities of snakes.

"My colleagues and I were excited when we successfully captured images that documented cartwheeling behavior in this species. We believe that this [behavior](#) may be more widespread in other small snake species, especially members of the subfamily Calamariinae, but the lack of records is probably an artifact of the challenges in detecting and observing these secretive [species](#)," said corresponding author Evan Seng Huat Quah, Ph.D., of Universiti Malaysia Sabah.

**More information:** Observations and description of a rare escape mechanism in a snake: Cartwheeling in *Pseudorabdion longiceps* (Cantor, 1847) (Squamata, Colubridea), *Biotropica* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/btp.13213](#)

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