Red pacu at Catchment Pond, Bukit Timah Nature Reserve


Subject identified by: Kelvin K. P. Lim.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, Catchment Pond at eastern boundary; 22 February 2010; 1729 hrs.

Habitat: Freshwater pond surrounded by lowland rainforest at the edge of reserve.

Observer: Nick Baker.

Observation: One example of at least 40 cm total length was observed in the pond, swimming near the surface of the water. From the dorso-lateral view, it is recognized by its thick-set body, dorsal fin with a short base, and the presence of an adipose fin (see photograph).

Remarks: The red pacu is a herbivorous fish from tropical South America that is closely related to (and whose appearance resembles) the piranhas. It is commonly reared in ponds in Southeast Asia as food and game fish. Small specimens are also sold as ornamental fish, which is inappropriate because of the large sizes they attain. Individuals met with in the wild are most likely abandoned pets that have outgrown the home aquarium. Although this species is probably capable of breeding in local waterways, there is no evidence that it has done so. Red pacus have been locally recorded from Jurong Lake and MacRitchie Reservoir (Ng & Tan, 2010: 102).


Photograph by Nick Baker

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