

Brown land crab *Cardisoma carnifex* in Singapore

Subject: Brown land crab, *Cardisoma carnifex* (Crustacea: Decapoda: Brachyura: Gecarcinucidae).

Subject identified by: Peter K. L. Ng & Jose C. E. Mendoza.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Nanyang Technological University Jurong Campus off Jalan Bahar, Carpark 1 of National Institute of Education; 11 June 2015; 1815 hrs.

Habitat: Urban parkland next to secondary forest and scrub.

Observer: Joanne S. Y. Lee.

Observation: An example of about 8 cm carapace width was found crouched at a corner of a parking lot. It was moving its pincers slightly, but was otherwise not crawling about during the two minutes of observation. The attached picture shows a view of its dorsal surface. The sky was clear and illuminated by the evening sun. There was little or no water in the surrounding drains.

Remarks: The blue land crab (*Discoplax hirtipes*) was recently rediscovered in Singapore on Saint John's Island in July 2015. It had not been seen in the country since 1938 (Khew, 2015). The brown land crab, *Cardisoma carnifex* is distinguished from *Discoplax hirtipes* (previously as *Cardisoma hirtipes*) in having a sub-ovate (vs transversely ovate) carapace, and short or no (vs. long and stiff) setae lining the merus of its legs. This completely terrestrial crab, which attains 12 cm carapace width, lives in deep burrows near the sea, often in back mangrove. It is widely distributed across the tropical Indo-west Pacific and is present in surrounding areas in Malaysia and Indonesia (Ng, 1998: 1148-1149). Although, the presence of *Cardisoma carnifex* in Singapore is not unexpected, the featured individual was found about 4 km from the sea and there is no mangrove habitat in close proximity. It is likely to be an escaped pet, but this species is not offered for sale in Singapore's pet stores. *Cardisoma armatum*, readily distinguishable from *Cardisoma carnifex* by its bright red legs, is frequently imported from its native West Africa and sold locally as pets. Despite this apparently being the first record of *Cardisoma carnifex* in Singapore, its presence there does not appear to be natural (Peter K. L. Ng, personal communication).



Photograph by Joanne S. Y. Lee

References:

- Khew, C., 2015. Land crab sighted after seven decades. *The Straits Times*. 18 July 2015: B12.
Ng, P. K. L., 1998. Crabs. In: Carpenter, K. E. & V. H. Niem (eds.). *FAO Species Identification Guide for Fishery Purposes. The Living Marine Resources of the Western Central Pacific. Volume 2. Cephalopods, Crustaceans, Holothurians and Sharks*. FAO, Rome. pp. 1046-1155.

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