

Malayan tapir at Changi North

Subject: Malayan tapir, *Tapirus indicus* (Mammalia: Perissodactyla: Tapiridae).

Subject identified by: Contributor.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Changi North, reclaimed land, near end of Aviation Park Road; 24 June 2016; around 0430 hrs.

Habitat: Reclaimed land with grass turf, concrete structures and metal fences.

Observers: Contributor's anonymous co-workers.

Observation: An adult tapir was observed trotting on a narrow strip of grass between a perimeter fence and metal railings along a concrete drain. A few images were obtained with mobile phones (Figs. 1-3 with white arrows indicating position of tapir). At the end of the strip, it jumped over the drain and disappeared into the sea. The animal's subsequent whereabouts are not known.

Remarks: In Singapore, the Malayan tapir is regarded as a visitor by Baker & Lim (2012: 170) based on only one previous record of an individual that was found dead in a quarry on Pulau Ubin in 1986 (Chua, 2000: 32; Chua & Lim, 2011). It was presumed to have swam across from Johor, and apparently fell to its death in the quarry.

The animal featured here, the second tapir on record in Singapore, and already reported in news articles (Chen, 2016; Yang, 2016), is likely to also have swum over from Malaysia, possibly by way of Pulau Tekong or Pulau Ubin. It could have been displaced by deforestation in the south-eastern corner of Johor. The feat of swimming less than 2 km across the Johor Strait to Pulau Tekong or Pulau Ubin, and crossing another channel of similar distance to Changi (distances measured from Google Maps) is not likely to be difficult for the Malayan tapir as it is known to be a good swimmer. It is even possible for the animal to have swum directly to Singapore Island. Nearby, at Peninsular Malaysia, an adult female tapir was caught alive in a fishing net at sea in the Straits of Malacca, about 4.6 km off Pontian towards Pulau Pisang, in June 1999 (Anonymous, 1999).

References:

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- Chua, M. A. H. & K. K. P. Lim, 2011. Tapirs. Family Tapiridae. In: Ng, P. K. L., R. T. Corlett & H. T. W. Tan (eds.). *Singapore Biodiversity - An Encyclopedia of the Natural Environment and Sustainable Development*. Editions Didier Millet & The Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research, National University of Singapore. p. 476.
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Contributor: Frankie **Cheong**

Contact address: frankie_cheong@yahoo.com.sg



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.

Photographs by the contributor's anonymous co-workers