

## Smooth-coated otter preying on African moony in Marina Reservoir

**Subjects:** African moony, *Monodactylus sebae* (Teleostei: Monodactylidae);  
Smooth-coated otter, *Lutrogale perspicillata* (Mammalia: Carnivora: Mustelidae).

**Subjects identified by:** Tan Heok Hui & Meryl Theng.

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Island, Marina Reservoir, Gardens by the Bay, north-east bank; 23 October 2016; 1101 hrs.

**Habitat:** Freshwater. Artificially dammed estuary surrounded by parkland and concrete buildings.

**Observer:** Nick Soo Chun Kit.

**Observation:** An African moony of around 20-25 cm total length was photographed being taken as prey by a smooth-coated otter along the edge of the reservoir (Fig. 1). The otter had clamped its jaws onto the head of the fish, most probably killing it in the process, and consumed it head first.

**Remarks:** *Monodactylus sebae* (Fig. 2) is native to the coastal areas of tropical West Africa from Senegal to Congo, where it occurs mainly in freshwater and brackish water lagoons, mangroves and estuaries; and grows up to 25 cm in total length and more than 35 cm deep (Shiotz & Dahlstrom, 1972: 144; Axelrod et al., 1996: 885; Schneider, 1990: 82 as *Psettias sebae*). This vertically elongate diamond-shaped fish is generally silver with dusky grey margins and three distinct blackish bars over the head and body.

The African moony is commonly imported into Singapore and sold as freshwater ornamental fish. It is usually available as juveniles between 5 and 10 cm (personal observation of H. H. Tan). In West Africa, it is also used as a food fish, and is caught with cast nets and gill nets (Schneider, 1990: 82 as *Psettias sebae*).

The present observation records the occurrence of *Monodactylus sebae* apparently for the first time outside of captivity in Singapore. It is believed that the featured example is a former pet fish possibly abandoned for having grown too large in a home aquarium.

This observation again shows that non-native fish species are significant prey items for the smooth-coated otter at Marina Bay, and other artificial environments in Singapore (Tan et al., 2015; Tan & Koh, 2016; Theng et al., 2016).

### References:

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Contributors: **Tan Heok Hui** & **Nick Soo Chun Kit**

Contact addresses: [heokhui@nus.edu.sg](mailto:heokhui@nus.edu.sg) (Tan), [fastbluesnail@gmail.com](mailto:fastbluesnail@gmail.com) (Soo)



Fig. 1. Smooth-coated otter having caught an adult African moony as prey in the Marina Reservoir. Photograph by Nick Soo Chun Kit



Fig. 2. Lateral views of two examples of *Monodactylus sebae* from the ornamental fish trade. Fish on the left (59.5 mm standard length) has its dorsal and anal fins fully erect. Specimen on the right (61.5 mm standard length) has its dorsal and anal fins clamped. Photographs by Tan Heok Hui