

A climbing perch at Lim Chu Kang

Subject: Asian climbing perch, *Anabas testudineus* (Teleostei: Anabantidae).

Subject identified by: Contributors.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Lim Chu Kang, Neo Tiew Road; 14 November 2016; 1156 hrs.

Habitat: Open parkland, on metaled road bordered by flooded fields and small freshwater ponds. It was raining heavily throughout the day and the fields were heavily flooded. The roads were very wet and slippery.

Observers: Contributors.

Observation: An adult climbing perch of about 12 cm total length was found in the middle of the road in the rain. It was propped upright (body perpendicular to the ground) by its pectoral fins (Fig. 1). The fish was in the process of crossing the width of the road. It did this by flipping its body right and left (Fig. 2), opening its gill covers such that the spiny edges come in contact with the floor to gain traction (Fig. 3), then shaking its head and flapping its body to propel itself forwards on the wet substrate (Fig. 4). It was also noted to be gulping atmospheric air with its mouth. A video recorded in-situ can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kE44Vhqd_hQ.

Remarks: The Asian climbing perch is among a few species of air-breathing fishes in Singapore that has the ability to travel overland from one body of water to another (Yeo et al., 2010: 149). The featured event, recorded in-situ and not artificially induced, appears to be rarely observed in nature. It is possible the fish was taking advantage of the rain and wet conditions to cross the road.

Reference: Yeo, D. C. J., L. K. Wang & K. K. P. Lim (eds.), 2010. *Private Lives. An Exposé of Singapore's Freshwaters*. The Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research, National University of Singapore. 258 pp.

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Fig. 1. Climbing perch in the act of crossing the road. Still image from video by Serin Subaraj



Fig. 2. In-situ photograph of climbing perch trying to position itself upright after flopping on its left side.



Fig. 3. In-situ photograph of climbing perch flaring open its right gill cover to gain traction on the floor.



Fig. 4. In-situ photograph of climbing perch showing it flaring open its right gill cover, and flapping its body to propel itself forward.

Still images from video by Serin Subaraj