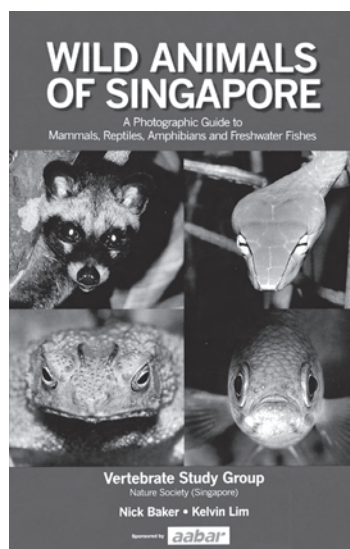




Wild Animals of Singapore. A Photographic Guide to Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians and Freshwater Fishes. Nick Baker and Kelvin Lim, 2008. Vertebrate Study Group, Nature Society (Singapore), Draco Publishing and Distribution Pte. Ltd., 180 pages. ISBN: 9789810594596.

This is a compact 19 cm by 12 cm soft-cover volume, meant for portability and frequent usage in the field.

It is lavishly filled with colour photographs of wild animals captured in-situ in Singapore (except the Cream-coloured Giant Squirrel). No less than 27 photographers and 13 contributors had contributed to this monumental piece of work. It had taken the core members more than three years to compile and finally produce this comprehensive guide, although the concept of this had probably started earlier.

The front cover is an attractive montage of the head-on views of the representative vertebrate animal groups, viz. clockwise – Common Palm Civet, Oriental Whip Snake, Asian Climbing Perch and Four-ridged Toad. The foreword (on page 7) is written by none other than the stalwart veteran of the study of Southeast Asia's wildlife, The Earl of Cranbrook. A preface is also provided by the Vertebrate Study Group of the Nature Society (Singapore), which provides the preamble to this guide. This guide is divided into four main sections:

- 1) the introduction dealing with the various habitats, extinction and alien species, with a special cautionary section on snakes;
- 2) places of interest to observe the wild animals in Singapore, which is accompanied with a map of modern expanded Singapore, and a section on Singapore rules and regulations;
- 3) species identification guide, which is divided into the different faunal groups of freshwater fishes, amphibians, reptiles and mammals;
- 4) updated checklists of extant species, introduced species, extinct species and doubtful species.

In total, this guide covers 34 native freshwater fishes (of which 27 are illustrated), 25 native amphibians (23 species are illustrated, together with 10 tadpole species), 90 native reptiles (of which 81 are illustrated) and 50 mammals (36 species illustrated). The avian fauna is not covered, as there had been numerous other previous works (e.g. see RBZ Supplement 15).

Each major animal group begins with a short introduction to the different families present in Singapore. Then each species is provided with an English vernacular name, scientific name, order and family names, and a short write-up on its habit,

biology and natural distributional range; accompanied usually with a colour photograph (sometimes more). A note of interest here is that the photographs of the fishes are unique, in that this is the first time all the fishes are shown in their natural way, i.e. being viewed from the water surface. This provides a very refreshing angle to identify and depict a fish. Some pictures had taken considerable effort to be captured, e.g. images of Malayan Colugo, Common Fruit Bat and Bamboo Bat in flight. There are also images of very rare and shy animals, e.g. Thorny Bush Frog, Brown's Flap-legged Gecko, Banded Leaf Monkey, Malayan Porcupine and Leopard Cat. Then there are the common but very elusive animals, e.g. Common Treeshrew, all rat species and Common House Shrew.

The checklists are the most comprehensive and up-to-date for Singapore, which include their conservation status. The checklists consist of names in bold which are depicted in this present guide, and the unbolded names have yet to be photographed. Several alien species are also illustrated (three fishes, two amphibians, six reptiles and two mammals).

All contributors (13 of them) who also form the committee members of the Vertebrate Study Group of the Nature Society (Singapore) are represented on pages 174–175. Pearl Energy/aabar, the sponsor of this publication is to be commended for their continued support for conservation in Singapore and region.

A must have for all naturalists, layperson and Singaporeans to know about the wild animals of Singapore.

Tan Heok Hui

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ERRATA & TAXONOMY UPDATE

Wild Animals of Singapore. A Photographic Guide to Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians and Freshwater Fishes.

Provided by Kelvin Lim

Errata

Pages 56, 158 – *Fejervarya cancrivora* should be *Fejervarya cancrivorus*.

Page 125 – *Trachemys decussates* should be *Trachemys decussate*.

Page 166 – **Freshwater Species** should read as **Freshwater Fishes**.

Taxonomy update

Pulchrana baramica (pp. 62, 159) is now *Hylarana baramica*.

Pulchrana laterimaculata (pp. 62, 159) is now *Hylarana laterimaculata*.

Hydrophylax raniceps (pp. 63, 158) is now *Hylarana raniceps*.

Python reticulatus (pp. 91, 160) is now *Broghammerus reticulatus*.