

Blackwater mud snake at Upper Seletar

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Subject: Blackwater mud snake, *Phytolopsis punctata* (Reptilia: Squamata: Homalopsidae).

Subject identified by: Law Ing Sind, Serin Subaraj, David Groenewoud & Law Ingg Thong.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Upper Seletar; 5 December 2015; around 2245 hrs.

Habitat: Small shallow stream in freshwater swamp forest, at the edge of parkland.

Observers: Law Ing Sind, Serin Subaraj, David Groenewoud & Law Ingg Thong.

Observation: An example of about 30 cm total length was observed with half its body sticking out from the mud and debris at the bottom of the stream. It was apparently taking a breath of air. The snake was temporarily placed on the leaf-litter at the bank of the stream for photography (fig. 1 & 2), and then released back where it was found. The observation was made after a heavy downpour which flooded the swamp forest.

Remarks: The blackwater mud snake was first discovered in Singapore within the Nee Soon swamp forest by National Parks surveyors in 2014 based on three specimens that were caught in fish traps (Thomas et al., 2014; Tan et al., 2014). It was believed that the snakes had entered the traps to feed on trapped fish. The present record differs in being from the edge of the swamp forest, and the snake was observed alive in-situ.

References:

- Thomas, N., T. Li, W. Lim & Y. Cai, 2014. New record of the blackwater mud snake in Singapore. *Singapore Biodiversity Records*. 2014: 309-310.
- Tan H. H., T. Li & W. Lim, 2014. A food item of the blackwater mud snake. *Singapore Biodiversity Records*. 2014: 311-312.



Fig. 1 Dorso-lateral view of the head and neck of the blackwater mud snake. Photograph by: Law Ing Sind



Fig. 2. Dorso-lateral view of the entire snake. Photograph by Serin Subaraj