

Rediscovery of the orange gull butterfly, *Cepora iudith malaya*, in Singapore

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Subjects: Orange gull, *Cepora iudith malaya* (Insecta: Lepidoptera: Pieridae).

Subjects identified by: Anuj Jain, Simon Kee Mun Chan, Michael Soh & Lena Chow.

Location, date and time: Pulau Ubin. At two locations.

1. Sensory Trail; 18 December 2018, 1420 hrs.
2. Jalan Batu Ubin; 10 January 2019, 1013 hrs.

Habitat: Secondary forest trails close to a water body.

Observers: Michael Soh & Lena Chow.

Observation: Adults of this species were photographed on two separate locations in Pulau Ubin.

1. A male was photographed perched on a simpoh ayer (*Dillenia suffruticosa*) shrub (Fig. 1B) along the Sensory Trail by Michael Soh on the afternoon of 18 December 2018 (iNaturalist, 2018; Fig 1). The same individual was then photographed puddling (Fig. 1A) near where it was first observed.

2. A female was photographed along Jalan Batu Ubin by Lena Chow on the morning of 10 January 2019 (iNaturalist, 2019; Fig 2). The same individual was found sunning itself on a leaf about 3 m high from the ground less than 500 m away from where the male was recorded on 18 December 2018.



Fig. 1. (A) The ventral side of the male orange gull observed puddling along the Sensory Trail at Pulau Ubin on 18 December 2018. (B) The dorsal side of the same individual observed perched on a simpoh ayer leaf. Note the relatively pristine condition of the wings. Photographs by Michael Soh

Remarks: The orange gull was recorded in Singapore by Corbet & Pendlebury (1956) and Fleming (1975) but was not reliably recorded since then and thus considered locally extinct (Jain et al., 2018; Khew, 2013). The two records featured here, therefore, represent a rediscovery of the species in Singapore. Because these two sightings occurred within a relatively short period of time from each other, this species is added to the Singapore butterfly checklist as a ‘vagrant’ (see Jain et al. 2018 for definition of ‘vagrant’ species).

The orange gull is widespread in Peninsular Malaysia from Langkawi to the south, where it is sometimes abundant at sandy spots on the banks of forest streams and at moist spots on jungle roads, at elevations of 1000 feet and below. The males are more commonly observed, sometimes seen puddling, while females appear to be rarer and only seen in denser forest (Corbet & Pendlebury, 1992).

Given that the tornal half of the upperside of the hindwing is a distinctive bright chrome yellow, the orange gull is easy to identify. However, to the casual observer, it can be confused with the chocolate albatross (*Appias lyncida vasava*). The latter is a regular seasonal migrant to Singapore (Jain et al., 2018). When compared to the male, the female orange gull is more heavily dusted in brownish black on the dorsal side, and has more prominent and isolated subapical white spots on cells 6 & 7 (see Fig 1B, Fig 2).

The individuals currently recorded from Pulau Ubin are likely to have been blown, or flown themselves, to Singapore from Johor, likely assisted by the northerly/north-easterly winds typically observed in Singapore from December to early March. The sightings of a male and female from Pulau Ubin over a period of 23 days and observed within 500 m of each other suggests potential breeding activity. However, no eggs or caterpillars have yet been recorded.

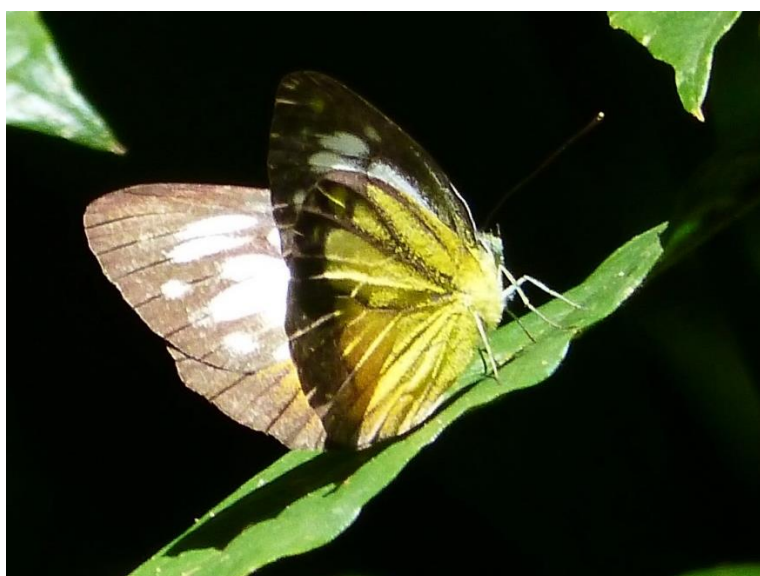


Fig. 2. The female Orange Gull observed sunning along Jalan Batu Ubin at Pulau Ubin on 10 January 2019. Photograph by Lena Chow.

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