A population of the black-snail, *Faunus ater*, in eastern Singapore

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**Subjects:** Black-snail, *Faunus ater* (Mollusca, Gastropoda, Pachychilidae).

**Subject identified by:** Lau Wing Lup & Chan Sow-Yan.

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Island, East Coast Park, Area B; 29 & 30 April 2019, afternoons.

**Habitat:** Man-made concretised monsoon drain about 1 m wide and 2.5 m deep, in coastal parkland. In brackish water and freshwater during mid to low tides.

**Observers:** Lau Wing Lup & Chan Sow-Yan.

**Observation:** Many individuals of *Faunus ater*, including juveniles, were seen grazing on algae and detritus on the bottom at some parts of the narrow drain (Fig. 1) in both brackish and fresh water. The water was brackish at mid-tide but became fresh at low tide with overflow from Marina Reservoir upstream, as well as ground seepage. The largest snails were of about 8 cm in shell height (Fig. 2). Many other molluscs typical of mangrove and freshwater habitats, such as *Terebralia sulcata*, were also observed occurring alongside the *Faunus ater* in the drain (Fig. 1).

**Remarks:** *Faunus ater*, an aquatic snail that inhabits fresh to slightly brackish water with tidal influences, is believed to be native to Singapore (Tan et al., 2012: 134). Following the discovery of a population with concentrated density at West Coast Park in 2001 (see Lok et al., 2011), this apparently recently established population in East Coast Park is the second location in Singapore where it occurs in quantity.

*Faunus ater* snails seen at the featured location differs morphologically with those from West Coast Park in their larger size, more slender shape, apparent absence of predation scar or encrustation, and with less eroded early whorls (Fig. 2). Most of the adult shells tend to be straight-sided, while some smaller snails display a combination of straight-sided and convex whorls all on the same shell. In comparison, shells from West Coast Park tend to have more consistently convex whorls (see Lok et al., 2011). The snail-animal colouration varies from black to pale orange in the West Coast Park population, and black to pale yellow in the East Coast Park population. Both populations share the same kind of man-made intertidal drainage habitat with periodic influx of freshwater.

In Vietnam, *Faunus ater* is relished as food by humans. The cooked snail is described to be slightly sweet and salty, with a muddy smell (Ky Nam Tran, personal communication). However snails collected from Malaysia is known to have heavy concentrations of metal (Yap et al., 2010).
Fig 2. Apertural views of live specimens of *Faunus ater* from East Coast Park showing shell variation. Photograph by Lau Wing Lup.

References: