

Biodiversity Record: Green iguanas and a clouded monitor at Jurong Hill

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Subjects: Clouded monitor, *Varanus nebulosus* (Reptilia: Squamata: Varanidae);
Green iguana, *Iguana iguana* (Reptilia: Squamata: Iguanidae).

Subjects identified by: Tan Heok Hui and Kelvin K. P. Lim.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Jurong Hill by Jalan Ahmad Ibrahim, compound of Jurong Bird Park; 13 December 2021; between 1000 and 1330 hrs.

Habitat: Urban parkland.

Observers: Tan Heok Hui and Kelvin K. P. Lim.

Observations: One clouded monitor of about 60 cm total length was noted basking on a patch of grass in the compound of the bird park just outside the Water Aviary exhibit (Fig. 1). No less than 10 green iguanas ranging from about 80 cm to over 1.5 m in total length were observed within and outside the compound of the park (Fig. 2). They were seen on the roof of buildings (Fig. 2A, B), tarmac paths (Fig. 2C), along driveways (Fig. 2E) and in trees (Fig. 2F). Some were skittish while others seemed habituated to people, allowing the observers to approach to within touching distance. One large individual swam to an island in the middle of a pond and ate pellets provided for waterfowl from a food trough (Fig. 2D).



Fig. 1. In situ, lateral view of the anterior part of the *Varanus nebulosus* seen at the Jurong Bird Park. (Photograph by: Tan Heok Hui).

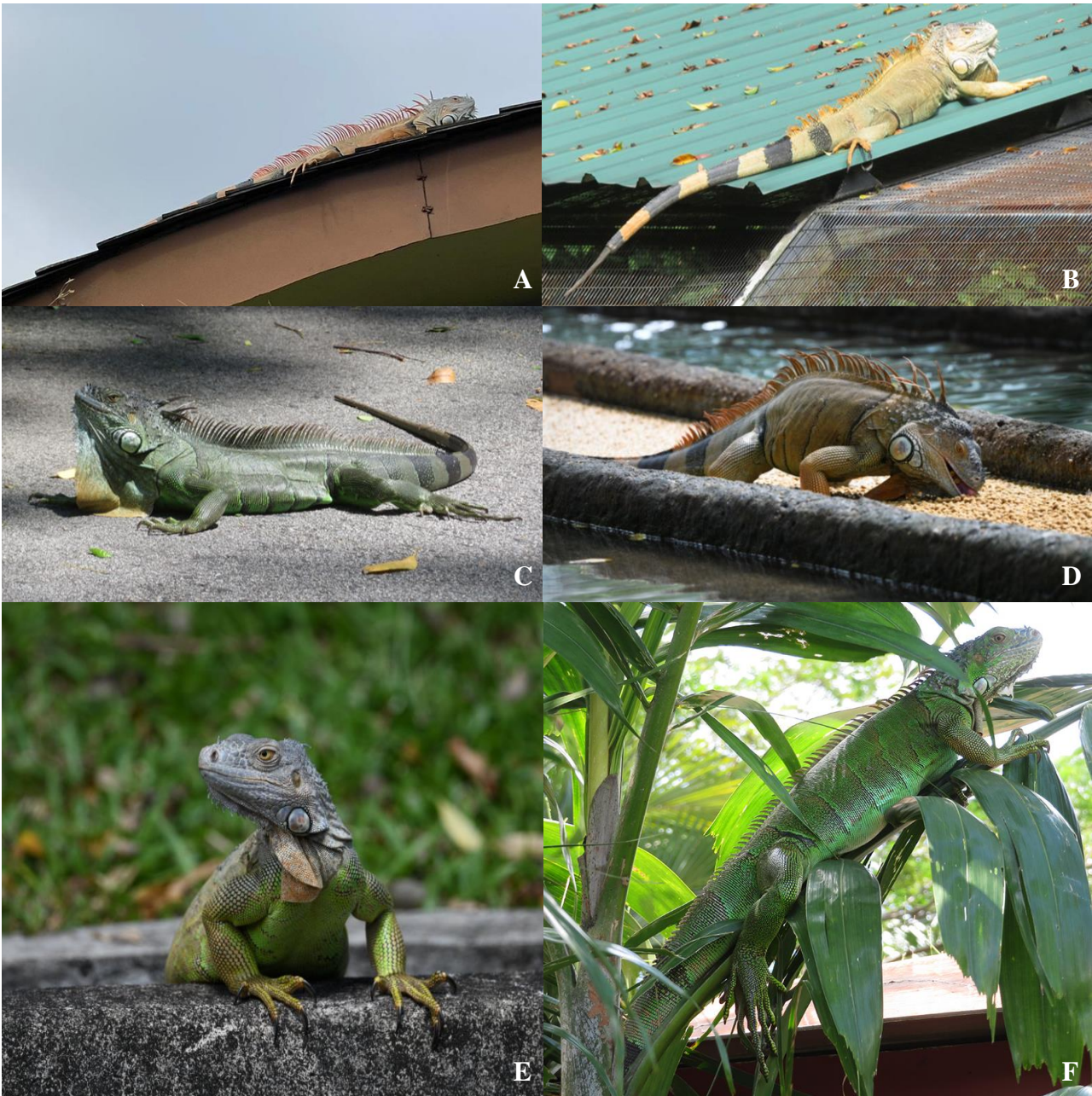


Fig. 2. In situ, lateral views of six of the feral *Iguana iguana* at Jurong Hill. A, large individual over 1.5 m long on the roof of the bird park's entrance plaza; B, another large adult around 1.5 m long basking on the roof of an aviary; C, individual about 1 m long on a tarmac path within the park; D, large example over 1.5 m long in a feeding trough in the middle of a pond eating pellets for ornamental waterfowl; E, example about 1 m long basking on the edge of a drain along a driveway outside the park's entrance plaza; F, another example around 1 m long perched about 3 m off the ground on the frond of a palm tree at the entrance plaza of the park. (Photographs by: A, D, E, Tan Heok Hui; B, C, F, Kelvin K. P. Lim).

Remarks: The clouded monitor is present mainly in the central part of Singapore Island in and around the Bukit Timah and Central Catchment Nature Reserves and Bukit Batok Nature Park, as well as on Pulau Ubin and Pulau Tekong (Baker & Lim, 2012: 88). It was also recorded from the Botanic Gardens (Thomas, 2013: 44), Bukit Brown (Kmiotek, 2013: 46, as *Varanus bengalensis nebulosus*) and Clementi Woods (Ho et al., 2019: 124), and further south at Singapore Polytechnic in the Dover estate (Singapore Polytechnic, 2014: 61, as "Malayan Monitor Lizard"). At around 1400 hrs on 14 March 2014, the authors saw an example about 80 cm in length at the edge of belukar vegetation at the bottom of a concrete retaining wall below Kent Ridge Road, behind a building in the Science Faculty of the National University of Singapore's Kent Ridge Campus. The individual scampered into a covered drain before it could be photographed (unpublished data). In the absence of photographic evidence, it represents an unconfirmed record south of Singapore Polytechnic, and suggests the presence of this lizard in the Southern Ridges. The record of *Varanus nebulosus* presented herein seems to be the first for the species in the southwestern part of Singapore Island, in the middle of an industrial estate.

The green iguana is a feral species that appears to be thriving in Singapore, with individuals reported from many parts of Singapore Island, usually in scrubland and parkland. The population at Jurong Hill is believed to have descended from 'escaped' individuals from the Jurong Reptile Park that closed in 2006 (van den Burg et al., 2020: 8–9). The featured individuals appear to be thriving in and outside the compound of the Jurong Bird Park, no doubt partaking in the varied and nutritious foods being fed daily to the birds on exhibit (see Fig. 2D). Although no neonates were observed, it seems certain that these lizards are reproducing in the area.

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