

## Biodiversity Record: The nipah palm crab, *Labuanium politum*, at Pasir Ris mangroves

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**Subjects:** Nipah palm crab, *Labuanium politum* (Crustacea: Decapoda: Sesarmidae).

**Subjects identified by:** Paul Y. C. Ng.

**Location, date, and time:** Singapore Island, Pasir Ris Park, mangrove boardwalk; 8 January 2022; around 2300 hrs.

**Habitat:** Mangrove forest.

**Observer:** Paul Y. C. Ng.

**Observation:** Five individuals, including an ovigerous female of about 3.5 cm carapace width (Fig. 1), were observed on nipah palms *Nypa fruticans* (Arecaceae), at low tide of about 0.7 m. A juvenile of about 2 cm carapace width was noted occupying an individual plant. All individuals were foraging on the leaves of the nipah palm at heights of between 2 and 4 m, with the exception of the ovigerous female, which remained near the base of the plant. When disturbed, they dropped into the water/mud below, before slowly making their way back to the base of the nipah palm. The individual at the base of the palm moved downwards and wedged itself firmly in the narrow spaces between the fronds (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Frontal view of an ovigerous female *Labuanium politum*, about 3.5 cm in carapace width, at the base of a nipah palm. (Photograph by: Paul Y. C. Ng).



Fig. 2. The same *Labuanium politum* individual retreating downwards and wedging itself firmly in the narrow space between the nipah palm fronds. (Photograph by: Paul Y. C. Ng).

**Remarks:** *Labuanium politum* is an obligate inhabitant of the nipah palm. It occurs widely in Southeast Asia and was first recorded from Singapore by Ng et al. (2015) based on specimens collected at a single patch of nipah palm at Pulau Ubin near Chek Jawa Wetlands. The species also occurs in the patches of nipah palm along the boardwalk of Chek Jawa Wetlands (pers. obs.). The present record is the first for the species on Singapore Island, which is unusual considering the mangroves at Pasir Ris are the most accessible and well visited, especially at night. *Labuanium politum* might be confused with other, more common mangrove sesarmids such as *Episesarma*, but can be distinguished in the field by the distinctly flatter carapace and flattened ambulatory legs. Considering its presence at Pasir Ris Park, *Labuanium politum* is likely to be found in other locations with nipah palm, such as Sungei Buloh, Admiralty Park and Pulau Tekong (Teo et al., 2010).

**Literature cited:**

- Ng PKL, Lee BY & Tan HH (2015) Notes on the taxonomy and ecology of *Labuanium politum* (De Man, 1887) (Crustacea: Decapoda: Sesarmidae), an obligate arboreal crab on the nipah palm, *Nypa fruticans* (Arecales: Arecaceae). Raffles Bulletin of Zoology, Supplement 31: 216–225.
- Teo S, Ang WF, Lok AFSL, Kurukulasuriya BR & Tan HTW (2010) The status and distribution of the Nipah palm, *Nypa fruticans* Wurm (Arecales: Arecaceae), in Singapore. Nature in Singapore, 3: 45–52.