

## Biodiversity Record: Singapore blue tarantula at the edge of Central Catchment Nature Reserve

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**Subject:** Singapore blue tarantula, *Omothymus violaceopes* (Arachnida: Araneae: Theraphosidae).

**Subject identified by:** Sean Yap, Joseph Koh and Jiayuan Lin.

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Island, north-eastern edge of the Central Catchment Nature Reserve; 23 September 2022; 1450–1733 hrs.

**Habitat:** On the trunk of an unidentified roadside tree at the edge of secondary forest.

**Observers:** Zick Soh Shun-Hua, Fiora Li, Ong Jun Xiang Lumin, Ng Yu Fei and Sean Yap.

**Observation:** One example of about 3.5 cm body length was first noticed at 1450 hrs about 11 cm above the ground on the tree trunk by Zick Soh Shun-Hua while he was photographing a mating pair of *Ypthima* butterflies (Figs. 1 & 2). The observer gently touched the spider with a stick to determine whether it was alive, and it immediately struck up a defensive pose (Figs. 3–5). After a while, the spider relaxed (Figs. 6 & 7). Although it did move, it remained more or less at the same spot for a few hours where it was seen by the other observers. The spider eventually settled into a crack among the tree bark (Fig. 8), but disappeared at 1733 hrs.

**Remarks:** *Omothymus violaceopes* is a large (females over 4.6 cm in body length), arboreal tarantula with well-developed velvety foot pads on the tarsi. Adult females and juveniles are a vibrant violet blue, while mature males (like the subject) are brown. They inhabit holes in tree trunks in mangroves and secondary forests. The species is distributed in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, and Singapore is its type locality (Koh et al., 2022).

While the Singapore blue tarantula is well-known and popular in the pet trade (see e.g., Adams, 2023; Jesse, 2022), it appears to be rarely encountered in the wild in Singapore. The subject is believed to be a wild individual since it was found at the edge of the forest.

### Literature cited:

- Adams R (2023) Singapore blue tarantula (*Omothymus violaceopes*) care sheet. KeepingExoticPets.com <https://www.keepingexoticpets.com/singapore-blue-tarantula-omothymus-violaceopes/> (Accessed 12 January 2023).
- Jesse A (2022) Singapore blue tarantula (*Omothymus violaceopes*): full guide. ThePetFAQ. <https://thepetfaq.com/singapore-blue-tarantula/> (Accessed 12 January 2023).
- Koh JKH, Court DJ, Ang CSP & Ng PYC (2022) A Photographic Guide to Singapore Spiders. National Parks Board, Singapore, x + 774 pp.



Fig.1. Tarantula (at top left) in close proximity to mating pair of *Ypthima* butterflies.

Fig. 2. Posture of tarantula when first noticed.

Fig. 3. Fronto-ventral view of tarantula striking defensive pose.

Fig. 4. Human hand placed carefully next to tarantula for size comparison.

Fig. 5. Dorsal view of tarantula in defensive pose.

Fig. 6. Dorsal view of tarantula in relaxed pose.

(Photographs by Zick Soh Shun-Hua)



Fig. 7. Tarantula in a relaxed pose. (Photograph by: Ng Yu Fei)



Fig. 8. Tarantula settled into a crack among the tree bark. (Photograph by: Ng Yu Fei)