

Biodiversity Record: Blackwater mud snake in a concretised drain

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Subject: Blackwater mud snake, *Phytolopsis punctata* (Reptilia: Squamata: Homalopsidae).

Subject identified by: Choo Ruirong.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Upper Seletar; 28 October 2020; around 2048 hrs.

Habitat: Freshwater. Concretised drain in parkland connecting to streams flowing out of adjacent swamp forest.

Observers: Choo Ruirong and others.

Observation: One individual of approximately 40 cm in total length was observed foraging underwater among leaf litter at the bottom of the drain (Figs. 1 & 2). On one occasion, it rose to the surface of the water to breathe. There was heavy rain earlier in the day.

Remarks: In Singapore, the blackwater mud snake is regarded as a rare and critically endangered species (see Figueroa et al., 2023). The species was first discovered in the country in 2014 at the Nee Soon swamp forest (Thomas et al., 2014; Tan et al., 2014). Additional reports include a live individual photographed in a small stream at the edge of the swamp forest in December 2015 (Serin et al., 2019), and another observed in the swamp forest in June 2017 (Figueroa et al., 2023). This record is interesting for the location was outside the swamp forest (albeit along the edges similar to that reported by Serin et al., 2019) and in a relatively exposed habitat with concrete embankments. It is likely that the snake had utilised the leaf litter substrate in the drain as cover. However, as the leaf litter is likely to be cleared on occasions to avoid blockage and water retention, the drain is unlikely to offer permanent residence for these snakes.



Fig. 1. Blackwater mud snake in-situ against the concrete side of a drain. (Photograph by: Choo Ruirong)



Fig 2. Same individual foraging among leaf litter, sensing the surroundings with its purple tongue. (Photograph by: Choo Ruirong)

Literature cited:

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