

Smooth-coated otters at MacRitchie Reservoir

Subjects: Smooth-coated otter, *Lutrogale perspicillata* (Mammalia: Carnivora: Mustelidae).

Subjects identified by: Contributor.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, MacRitchie Reservoir, western edge; 16 August 2015; around 1530 hrs.

Habitat: Freshwater. On the grassy shore of a man-made lake surrounded by secondary forest.

Observer: Contributor.

Observation: A pack of five otters, consisting of two adults and three subadults, were first observed frolicking in the water. One of them was eating a crayfish (Fig. 1). They then climbed out onto the short grass by the water's edge (Fig. 2), where they proceeded to roll about and rub their bodies on the grass (Fig. 3 and video footage at http://youtu.be/D9_uucc4HzI).

Remarks: The smooth-coated otter usually frequents coastal habitats in Singapore (see Baker & Lim, 2012: 153). It has recently been seen inland at Bishan Park, the Botanic Gardens and Bedok Reservoir (Anonymous, 2014; Ee, 2013; Tan, 2014). This is probably the first published record of its occurrence in MacRitchie Reservoir, at the centre of Singapore Island. Their spread inland seems to be encouraged by the proliferation of non-native fishes in the reservoirs (see Ng & Tan, 2010; Yong et al., 2014; Tan et al., 2015). It is not known if this pack of otters is resident in the area. The crustacean that one of the otters was eating (Fig. 1) is most likely a red-clawed crayfish, *Cherax quadricarinatus*, an alien species native to New Guinea and tropical Australia (see Yeo, 2010: 86).

References:

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Fig. 1. An otter eating a crayfish it had caught in the reservoir. Photograph by Lai Hao Ran



Fig. 2. Three of the otters at the water's edge, about to climb onto the grass.



Fig. 3. Three of the otters rolling about on the grass.

Photographs by Lai Hao Ran

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