

Smooth-coated otters at Tuas

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

Subjects identified by: Contributors.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, coastal waters off Tuas Marine Transfer Station; 5 August 2015; around 1335 hrs.

Habitat: Marine. Shore of granite rocks covered with some coral growth, adjacent to built up reclaimed land.

Observers: Contributors, with Kate Pocklington and Chen Mingshi.

Observation: A pair of otters were observed swimming close to (less than 20 m away from the observers) and parallel to the shore southwards during high tide. One of them dived and surfaced with a uniformly blackish damselfish (family Pomacentridae) of unknown genus and species, which was then consumed in the water (see accompanying picture).

Remarks: The smooth-coated otter is listed as globally vulnerable to extinction (de Sukva et al., 2015), and regarded as critically endangered in Singapore (Lim et al., 2008). After a period of apparent absence, smooth-coated otters have been seen in many coastal and riverine habitats in Singapore (Ee, 2013; Tan, 2014). This appears to be the first published record of the species at the southwestern end of Singapore, and of damselfish being part of the otter's diet.

References:

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- Ee, D., 2013. More sightings of wild otters in S'pore. *The Straits Times*. Monday, April 22, 2013: B3.
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Photograph by Iffah binte Iesa

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