

## Additional fishes observed at Bishan Park

**Subjects:** Common snakehead, *Channa striata* (Teleostei: Channidae), Fig. 1;  
Redhead cichlid, *Vieja melanura* (Teleostei: Cichlidae), Figs. 2 & 3.

**Subjects identified by:** Contributor.

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Island, Bishan - Ang Mo Kio Park; 7 August 2015, 1615 hrs.

**Habitat:** Freshwater. Water channel with sides planted with grass and ornamental plants, flowing through urban parkland.

**Observer:** Contributor.

**Observations:** One large *Channa striata* of around 40 cm total length (Fig. 1 left) was sighted in the main channel. A larger example of about 50 cm total length was observed eating terrestrial insects or worms in a flooded stream bank (Fig. 1 right). At least three individuals of *Vieja melanura* of around 15 to 20 cm total length were seen in the main channel near a grassy bank (Figs. 2 & 3). Tilapia (*Oreochromis mossambicus*) and African sharp-tooth walking catfish (*Clarias gariepinus*) were also observed.

**Remarks:** The fish fauna of Bishan Park has been documented by Yeo (2013) and Tan & Koh (2015). The two species herein featured are additions to the records.

The common snakehead, *Channa striata*, is a native species that is common in exposed and disturbed bodies of freshwater (Baker & Lim, 2012). It must be noted that the second fish illustrated in the right picture of Fig. 1 has a comparatively broader head and seems to lack dark bars on its dorsum. These features suggest that it may be a black snakehead, *Channa melasoma*. However, *Channa melasoma*, is an inhabitant of shaded forest streams and is not expected in the featured habitat. The featured individual is also unusually large for the latter species which is known to attain a maximum total length of 28 cm (see Baker & Lim, 2012).

The redhead cichlid had been documented from reservoirs in Singapore, and may have been introduced as abandoned pets (Ng & Tan, 2010 as *Vieja synspila*; Kwik et al., 2013 as *Paratheraps synspilum*). It is not surprising that this species is also found in other artificial water bodies and channels in Singapore.

### References:

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Fig. 1. Dorsal views of common snakeheads, *Channa striata*. Left picture: example of around 40 cm in the main channel. Right picture: a larger one of about 50 cm foraging in a flooded stream bank.



Fig. 3. Dorsal view of *Vieja melanura* (female on left, male on right) in the main channel.



Fig. 4. A male *Vieja melanura* foraging on plant matter at the water's surface.

Photographs by Tan Heok Hui