

Giant snakehead in saltwater at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

Subject: Giant snakehead or Toman, *Channa micropeltes* (Teleostei: Channidae).

Subject identified by: Contributors.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, Sungei Buloh Besar by sluice gate next to main bridge; 21 February 2016; 1640 hrs.

Habitat: Estuarine. Mangrove-lined stream with saltwater and mud substrate.

Observers: Contributors.

Observation: An adult example of at least 80 cm total length was found in shallow, saline water (see accompanying picture) in the company of cichlids (*Cichalosoma urophthalmum* and *Oreochromis niloticus* at the upper right corner of the picture) and archerfish (*Toxotes jaculatrix*, two individuals at the upper left corner of the picture). The fish appeared sluggish, with its dorsal fin protruding out of water. A while later, it swam into deeper water and disappeared from the observers' view.

Remarks: The giant snakehead is a non-native fish in Singapore that inhabits freshwater (Lim & Ng, 1990; Ng & Tan, 2010). The featured individual was most likely flushed into the Sungei Buloh Besar from freshwaters upstream or from the Kranji Reservoir.

This species is not known to be able to survive for the long term in saltwater. It is likely to die from osmotic shock if it is unable to return to freshwater.

References:

- Lim, K. K. P. & P. K. L. Ng, 1990. *A Guide to the Freshwater Fishes of Singapore*. Singapore Science Centre, 160 pp.
- Ng, H. H. & H. H. Tan, 2010. An annotated checklist of the non-native freshwater fish species in the reservoirs of Singapore. *COSMOS*. 6 (1): 95-116.



Photograph by Tan Heok Hui

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