

Biodiversity Record: Juvenile flying fish, *Parexocoetus mento*, at Keppel Island

Ong JunXiang Lumin* & Tay Jing Xuan

Email: luminongjx@gmail.com (*corresponding author)

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Subjects: African sailfin flying fish, *Parexocoetus mento* (Teleostei: Beloniformes: Exocoetidae).

Subjects identified by: Jiayuan Lin and Clinton A. J. Duffy.

Location, date and time: Singapore Strait, Keppel Island; 17 April 2024; 1653–1835 hrs.

Habitat: Marine. Surface of the sea along a seawall, adjacent to docks populated with sedentary marine life. At rising tide.

Observers: Ong JunXiang Lumin and Tay Jing Xuan.

Observation: Six small flying fish estimated to be between 1 and 3 cm in total length were spotted at the surface of the water (Figs. 1–4). They were swimming around, seemingly foraging for food. When approached from below by larger fishes such as sardines (*Sardinella* sp.) and yellowstripe scads (*Selaroides leptolepis*), the flying fishes leapt out of the water, traveling several times their body length in the air before landing all in less than a second. While they were not able to sustain their flight in the air, they were able to quickly leap again after landing. They were also observed to leap against waves, and periodically seek shelter among flotsam, such as pieces of sargassum.

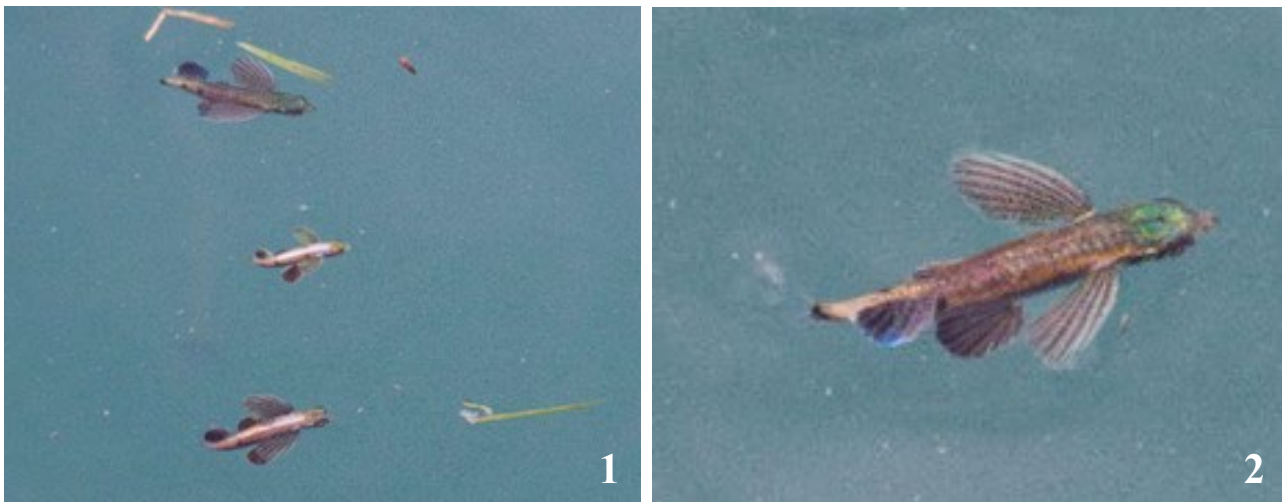


Fig. 1. Dorsolateral view of three juvenile flying fish swimming out to open water. Fig. 2. Dorsal view of the largest individual observed, about 3 cm in total length (Photographs by: Ong JunXiang Lumin).

Remarks: The three individuals in Fig. 1 were identified as *Parexocoetus mento* by Clinton A. J. Duffy on iNaturalist (see: <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/208452051>). This species is known to occur in Singapore where it has been observed along the coast (Tan & Lim, 2014; Tan & Shi, 2022). An unidentified *Parexocoetus* was also encountered in intertidal shore at Tanah Merah (Chan & Lim, 2013). The examples featured here are unlike the specimens collected off Kusu Island (Tan & Lim, 2014), but similar to the example sighted beneath Pasir Panjang jetty (Tan & Shi, 2022), in having black pelvic fins (see Figs. 1–4).

The appearance of juvenile *Parexocoetus* along the shore seems to be connected to the tides. Subsequent visits to the same site during receding tides yielded zero sightings of these flying fishes, alongside other surface dwellers. Visits during rising tides all yielded individuals of varying sizes. When not venturing into the open, these fish tend to seek shelter under and among flotsam and large structures such as jetties (personal observations).



Fig. 3. Dorsal view of a smaller individual of about 1.5 cm total length. Fig. 4. Dorsolateral view of second largest individual observed, about 2.5 cm in total length (Photographs by: Tay Jing Xuan).

Literature cited:

- Chan SY & Lim KKP (2013) Flying fish *Parexocoetus* sp. At Tanah Merah shore. Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2013: 84.
- Tan HH & Lim KKP (2014) African sailfin flying fish in the Singapore Straits. Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2014: 160.
- Tan HH & Shi T (2022) Biodiversity Record: A sailfin flying fish at Pasir Panjang. Nature in Singapore, 15: e2022081.