

Biodiversity Record: Cantor's water snakes at Pasir Ris Park

Hamadnurriyat Bin Mohd Azam

Email: hamadnurriyat@gmail.com

Recommended citation. Azam HBM (2024) Biodiversity Record: Cantor's water snakes at Pasir Ris Park. Nature in Singapore, 17: e2024123. DOI: 10.26107/NIS-2024-0123

Subjects: Cantor's water snake, *Cantoria violacea* (Reptilia: Squamata: Homalopsidae).

Subjects identified by: Hamadnurriyat Bin Mohd Azam.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island: Pasir Ris Park, mangrove boardwalk; 3 August 2024; 2223 hrs & 2327 hrs respectively.

Habitat: Estuarine. Small patch of mangrove forest within urban parkland, during high and receding tide.

Observers: Hamadnurriyat Bin Mohd Azam and Wong Kwang Ik.

Observation: Three adult individuals were observed on the same night (Figs. 1–3). The largest was approximately 110 cm long and almost fully black with indistinct whitish bands, while the two others were around 90–100 cm each and had prominent pale yellow bands. All three were actively moving, with the first seen at 2223 hrs during high tide, slowly appearing out of a mud mound and crawling on land (Fig. 1). The other two, including the largest individual (Figs. 2 & 3) were spotted later at 2327 hrs as the tide was receding. They were spaced about 3 m apart, crawling over land and partially submerged in water.

Remarks: The Cantor's water snake is one of four species of homalopsid snakes that inhabit the small patch of mangrove forest at Pasir Ris Park. This aquatic species is known to be primarily nocturnal and feeds on snapping shrimps (Voris & Murphy, 2002). In Singapore, it can also be found at the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve (Baker & Lim, 2008; Yau & Kamisan, 2020) and is considered as 'endangered' (Thomas & Law, 2024).

In a study on the ecology of rear-fanged water snakes in Pasir Ris Park, only four *Cantoria violacea* were collected over 12 survey nights (Karns et al., 2002). There were apparently no reports of the species from the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve for over a decade before a deceased example was found by Yau & Kamisan (2020). The observation of three different individuals within an hour at Pasir Ris mangrove is noteworthy, and appears to suggest that *Cantoria violacea* is doing well there.

Literature cited:

- Baker N & Lim KKP (2012) Wild Animals of Singapore. A Photographic Guide to Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians and Freshwater Fishes. Updated edition. Draco Publishing and Distribution Pte. Ltd. and Nature Society (Singapore), 180 pp.
- Karns DR, Voris HK & Goodwin TG (2002) Ecology of Oriental-Australian rear-fanged water snakes (Colubridae: Homalopsinae) in the Pasir Ris Park mangrove forest, Singapore. The Raffles Bulletin of Zoology, 50: 487–498.
- Thomas N & Law IS (2024) Reptiles. In: Davison GWH, Gan JWM, Huang D, Hwang WS, Lum SKY & Yeo DCJ (eds.) The Singapore Red Data Book. Red Lists of Singapore Biodiversity. Third edition. National Parks Board, Singapore, pp. 357–367.
- Voris HK & Murphy JC (2002) The prey and predators of homalopsine snakes. Journal of Natural History, 36: 1621–1632.
- Yau SJM & Kamisan K (2020) Cantor's water snake at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2020: 143–144.



Fig. 1. Dorso-lateral view of the first and smallest *Cantoria violacea* soon after appearing out of a mud mound. Fig. 2. Lateral view of the second and largest individual during receding tide. Note its indistinct white bands. Fig. 3. Dorso-lateral view of the third individual on the mangrove floor during receding tide (Photographs by: Hamadnurifat Bin Mohd Azam).