

Biodiversity Record: Buffalo leeches attached to a red-eared slider

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Subjects: Asian buffalo leech, *Hirudinaria manillensis* (Annelida: Clitellata: Hirudinidae);
Red-eared slider, *Trachemys scripta elegans* (Reptilia: Testudines: Emydidae).

Subject identified by: Jenson Neo.

Location, date and time: Singapore island, Bukit Panjang, Pang Sua Pond; 22 March 2022; around 2041 hrs.

Habitat: Urban parkland. Large freshwater pond with rocky edges.

Observer: Jenson Neo.

Observation: A leech, approximately 9 cm almost fully stretched, was found with its posterior sucker attached to the carapace of a red-eared slider, and its anterior end firmly attached to the left hind limb of the terrapin (Fig. 1). A smaller leech, approximately 2 cm in relaxed state, was attached to the terrapin's carapace beside the larger leech. The terrapin, exposed on the rocks, made a sudden movement and dived into the water, before resurfacing.

Remarks: The buffalo leech is a parasitic annelid that occurs in Singapore's freshwater bodies. It has previously been recorded in the Mandai area (Tan & Yeo, 2015; Serin et al., 2015) and Jurong Lake Gardens (Chan & Lau, 2022). It is assumed that the leeches were feeding on the blood of the turtle. The identification of the leeches herein as *Hirudinaria manillensis* is tentative.

In Singapore, there is at least one record of a buffalo leech approaching humans (Serin et al., 2015), possibly treating them as hosts. Apart from the present record, there appears to be a lack of information regarding the interspecies relationship between these leeches and other fauna in Singapore.

Although red-eared sliders are semi-aquatic, they can travel long distances on land to lay eggs (Tan, 2024), which provides support to the assumption that they may aid in the dispersal of such leeches to other bodies of freshwater.

Literature cited:

Tan HH & Yeo JWL (2015) Freshwater leech brooding behaviour. Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2015: 83–84.
Chan S-Y & Lau WL (2022) Biodiversity Record: Buffalo leech at Jurong Lake. Nature in Singapore, 15: e2022060.
Serin S, Law IS & Sankar A (2015) Freshwater leech at Mandai. Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2015: 67.
Tan JQ (2024) Biodiversity Record: A red eared slider nesting near Sungei Punggol. Nature in Singapore, 17: e2024102. DOI: 10.26107/NIS-2024-0102



Fig. 1 Dorsal view of a red-eared slider with two leeches attached to the rear part of its carapace. (Photograph by: Jenson Neo).