

Biodiversity Record: A black-backed dwarf kingfisher at the Botanic Gardens

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Subject: Black-backed dwarf kingfisher, *Ceyx erithaca* (Aves: Coraciiformes: Alcedinidae).

Subject identified by: Poh Yee Goh and Rie Chong.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Singapore Botanic Gardens, Cluny Road; 24 October 2025; around 0943 hrs.

Habitat: Urban parkland.

Observers: Poh Yee Goh and G. Kenny Png.

Observations: One example of about 14 cm (beak and body length) was observed on the pavement appearing lethargic (Fig. 1). It made no attempt to flee as the observers approached. After approximately 10 minutes, the bird showed its first sign of alertness by hopping towards a bench about 2 m away (Fig. 2). After seeking shelter under the bench for about 10 minutes, the bird took flight and rapidly disappeared from the observers' sight.



Fig. 1. Dorsal view of black-baked dwarf kingfisher inactive on open pavement for around 10 minutes. Fig. 2. Same bird seeking shelter under a bench (Photographs by: G. Kenny Png).

Remarks: The black-backed dwarf kingfisher is classified as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (BirdLife International, 2023) and noted to be an uncommon migrant in Singapore (Bird Society of Singapore, n.d.). Consistent sightings within the Singapore Botanic Gardens during the expected migratory months from September to March in previous years (GBIF Secretariat, 2023), as well as the present observation, suggests the utility of functional urban greenspaces as refuge and 'stepping stone' habitats supporting regional migratory bird species (Buron et al., 2022).

The subject's location on open concrete pavement outside a building, combined with its minimal flight response over 10 minutes as the observers approached, is unusual. This suggests the bird was likely in a state of exhaustion from its migratory journey (Schmaljohann et al., 2022), or it could have been temporarily stunned from colliding into an urban

structure (Klem, 1990; Low et al., 2017). The eventual flight response, presumably to seek a safer environment than the open pavement, indicated that the bird had recovered its strength and orientation.

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