

## Biodiversity Record: The nipah palm crab, *Labuanium politum*, at Sungei Pang Sua

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**Subjects:** Nipah palm crab, *Labuanium politum* (Crustacea: Decapoda: Sesarmidae).

**Subjects identified by:** Oh Rui Quan and Chen Xuanhe.

**Location, date and times:** Singapore Island, Sungei Pang Sua; 16 January 2026; around 1830 hrs.

**Habitat:** Tidal section of naturalised canal fringed with secondary back mangrove vegetation on man-made debris and mud banks, approximately 3.5 km away from the sea, during high tide of about 1.2 m.

**Observers:** Oh Rui Quan and Chen Xuanhe.

**Observations:** Two individuals, respectively of 1.5 cm and 2 cm carapace width, were observed on nipah palms (*Nipa fruticans*) (Figs. 1 & 2). Upon the approach of the observers, the crabs actively sought refuge by wedging themselves into the narrow space between the palm fronds (Fig. 1). Other arboreal crabs observed in the same location and habitat are the confamilial *Episesarma palawanense* (Fig. 3), *Episesarma singaporense* (Fig. 4), *Episesarma versicolor* (Fig. 5), *Selatium brockii* (Fig. 6) and *Parasesarma* sp. (Fig. 7).



Fig. 1. In-situ frontal view of *Labuanium politum* of about 2 cm carapace width wedged between nipah palm fronds. (Photograph by: Oh Rui Quan) Fig. 2. Dorsal view of female of 1.5 cm carapace width (Photograph by: Chen Xuanhe).

**Remarks:** *Labuanium politum* is an obligate inhabitant of nipah palm, first recorded from Singapore at Pulau Ubin (Ng et al., 2015), and subsequently at Pasir Ris Park (Ng, 2022). The authors have observed this species at Admiralty Park in 2025 (unpublished record). The species' nocturnal and cryptic nature may contribute to its potential occurrence in other locations where nipah palms occur (see Teo et al., 2010). It likely evades detection due to only emerging in the night, around 8 to 9 pm, to forage (Ng et al., 2015). It is worth noting that the featured habitat, formerly a tributary of Sungei Kranji, appeared to be disconnected from the sea after the impoundment of Kranji Reservoir in 1972, but was realigned in 1980, discharging into the Johor Strait (Urban Redevelopment Authority, 1980). A search on Google Earth shows that the secondary mangrove fringe at the site first appeared around 2015, implying the population of *Labuanium politum* there may have been recently established.



Other arboreal crabs found alongside the main subjects:

Fig. 3. In-situ latero-frontal view of *Episesarma palawanense*.  
(Photograph by: Oh Rui Quan)

Fig. 4. In-situ dorso-frontal view of *Episesarma singaporense*.  
(Photograph by: Chen Xuanhe)

Fig. 5. In-situ frontal view of *Episesarma versicolor*.  
(Photograph by: Chen Xuanhe)

Fig. 6. In-situ dorsal view of *Selatium brockii*.  
(Photograph by: Chen Xuanhe)

Fig. 7. In-situ frontal view of *Parasesarma* sp.  
(Photograph by: Ou Rui Quan)

#### Literature cited:

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