

## Biodiversity Record: Asian openbill storks at the Botanic Gardens on 13 February 2026

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**Subjects:** Asian openbill stork, *Anastomus oscitans* (Aves: Ciconiiformes: Ciconiidae).

**Subjects identified by:** Koh Jun Wang.

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Island, compound of the Singapore Botanic Gardens; 13 February 2026; 1030–1611 hrs.

**Habitat:** Urban parkland.

**Observers:** Koh Jun Wang, Lork Wan Xuan Elaine, Loh Pei Qian Amanda, and Chen Sihui

**Observations:** At least two individuals were observed at various parts of the gardens between 1030 and 1611 hrs.



Fig. 1. Stork (indicated by arrow) on a *Pithecellobium dulce* over Symphony Lake. (Photograph by: Koh Jun Wang). Fig. 2. Stork preening over Symphony Lake. (Photograph by: Loh Pei Qian Amanda). Fig. 3. Stork among *Metroxylon* at Symphony Lake. (Photograph by: Koh Jun Wang). Fig. 4. Stork foraging at overflow of Symphony Lake. (Photograph by: Loh Pei Qian Amanda).

Symphony Lake — At around 1030 hrs, an openbill stork was spotted preening on the branch of *Pithecellobium dulce* overhanging the lake around the Shaw Foundation Symphony Stage (Figs. 1 & 2). The same individual flew over to the outflow of the lake where it was foraging for aquatic snails among *Metroxylon* sp at around 1300 hrs (Figs. 3 & 4).

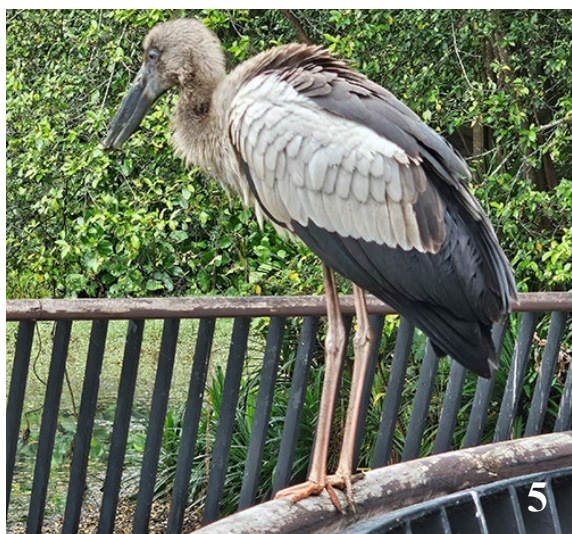


Fig. 5. Individual with tips of its bill apparently broken, perched on the railings of Eco Bridge. (Photograph by: Lork Wan Xuan Elaine). Fig. 6. Another stork, with tips of its bill intact, feeding on aquatic snails at Eco Lake. (Photograph by: Koh Jun Wang).

Eco Lake — One individual was perched on the handrail of the Eco Bridge near human traffic at around 1428 hrs. The tips of its bill appear to be broken (Fig. 5). One bird with intact bill tips was feeding on aquatic snails at the exposed banks of the lake at around 1446 hrs (Fig. 6).



Fig. 7. Stork foraging at the banks of the swale at the Children's Garden. (Photograph by: Chen Sihui). Fig. 8. Stork at Jacob Ballas' Children's Garden foraging among leaf litter next to a wild rooster. (Photograph by: Lork Wan Xuan Elaine).

Jacob Ballas Children's Garden — At around 1533 hrs, one bird was observed foraging along the banks of the swale (Fig. 7). At around 1611 hrs, this same individual was seen in another part of the Children's Garden, feeding on an unidentified terrestrial mollusc that it had extracted from the leaf litter, in the company of wild chickens (*Gallus gallus*) (Fig. 8). It is not clear if this is the same bird with intact bill observed earlier at the Symphony Lake and Eco Lake.

**Remarks:** The Asian openbill is a greyish-white stork that is readily distinguished from other large waterbirds in Asia by having a bill with an open space between the mandibles (Robson, 2000). It is widespread throughout the Indian subcontinent and mainland Southeast Asia, with breeding colonies in Thailand, Cambodia, and southern Vietnam (Low et al., 2013). It frequents wetlands where it forages for aquatic mollusks which form the main part of its diet. It has been observed to extract the flesh of snails by cutting away the muscle attachment to the columella with its lower bill underwater, then shaking the shell from the flesh out of water (Wong, 2025). It has also been observed to puncture the shells of larger prey like the golden apple snail (*Pomacea canaliculata*) (see Sawangproh, 2021).

In Singapore, the Asian openbill is considered a rare migrant (Birds Society of Singapore, 2026) that was first recorded in 2013 at Seletar Airport, Seletar North, Neo Tiew Lane, and Jurong Island (Low et al., 2013). From 23 January 2025 to 25 February 2026, at least 300 individuals were counted within Singapore (Birds Society of Singapore, 2026). The current conservation status of the Asian openbill is accessed by IUCN in 2025 as of Least Concern (Birdlife International, 2026).

From observations at three different areas of the Botanic Gardens at different times, the number of openbill storks sighted there on 13 February 2026 was at least two. However, up to four individuals could have been seen for, apart from the individual with broken bill tips (Fig. 5), the other three (Figs. 1–4, 6–8) appear to be indistinguishable. The featured sightings may be the first report of the species at the Botanic Gardens. The birds were foraging alone despite being often seen flying around in large flocks (Low et al., 2013; Sim, 2025). Also notable is the consumption of a terrestrial snail by one of the birds.

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