

## Biodiversity Record: Attempted predation of a walking catfish by a Malayan brown snake

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**Subjects:** Malayan brown snake, *Xenelaphis hexagonotus* (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae);  
Walking catfish, *Clarias* sp. (Teleostei: Siluriformes: Clariidae).

**Subjects identified by:** Robbin Tan.

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Island, Central Catchment Nature Reserve, Macritchie Reservoir, boardwalk along Golf Link; 10 February 2026; 1707–1711 hrs.

**Habitat:** Stream in freshwater swamp-forest.

**Observers:** Koi Jun Chee and a class of ten students.

**Observation:** The snake, around 1.5 m in length, was first spotted at 1707 hrs where it was in the process of swallowing a catfish (Fig. 1). It was rolling about out of water, making little progress in ingesting the fish, before dragging the fish into the stream (Figs. 2 & 3). At 1709 hrs, the snake was seen struggling with the fish underwater (Fig. 4) beneath the boardwalk. Within one minute, the snake re-emerged without the catfish. The observers were unable to ascertain if the catfish had escaped or if it had been rapidly swallowed by the snake. The snake was observed periscoping out of the water (Fig. 5) before swimming across the stream and disappearing into the undergrowth at 1711 hrs.



Figs. 1–3. In-situ dorso-lateral views of the snake rolling about with the catfish in its mouth. (Screenshots from a video recorded by: Koi Jun Chee).

**Remarks:** *Xenelaphis hexagonotus* can attain a total length of 2 m and is typically associated with lowland, waterlogged habitats such as coastal peat swamps and mangrove forests (Das, 2012). In Singapore, the species has been recorded primarily in mature forest, where it readily enters water bodies, presumably to hunt large fish (Baker & Lim, 2012). Locally, the species is infrequently encountered and is classified as Critically Endangered in the third edition of the Singapore Red Data Book (Thomas et al., 2024).

Its diet has been reported to include rodents, frogs, and fish, although direct observations of predation remain rare. According to Figueroa et al. (2023: 177), documented predation events involving *Xenelaphis hexagonotus* in Singapore include one observed consuming an unidentified fish at Lower Peirce Forest in September 2015, as well as another found swallowing a swamp-eel (as *Monopterus albus*) at Upper Seletar Reservoir in May 1990. The featured predation event, although apparently unsuccessful, adds walking catfish of the genus *Clarias* to the diversity of fish in the diet of *Xenelaphis hexagonotus*.



Fig. 4: Top view of the snake dragging the catfish into the stream. (Screenshot from video recorded by: Koi Jun Chee). Fig. 5: Top view of the snake's periscoping behaviour. (Photograph by: Koi Jun Chee).

**Literature cited:**

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