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Biodiversity Record: A sharksucker attaching to mullets at Pasir Ris mangrove

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Subjects: Sharksucker, *Echeneis naucrates* (Teleostei: Carangiformes: Echeneidae);
Greenback mullet, *Planiliza subviridis* (Teleostei: Mugiliformes: Mugilidae).

Subjects identified by: Weiting Xu and Jiayuan Lin.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Pasir Ris Park, Sungei Tampines beneath mangrove boardwalk; 24 September 2025; around 0855 hrs.

Habitat: Estuarine mangrove-lined channel at low tide.

Observers: Weiting Xu, Wai Lun Cheong, and Zyon Aaronel Zhun Wei Wee.

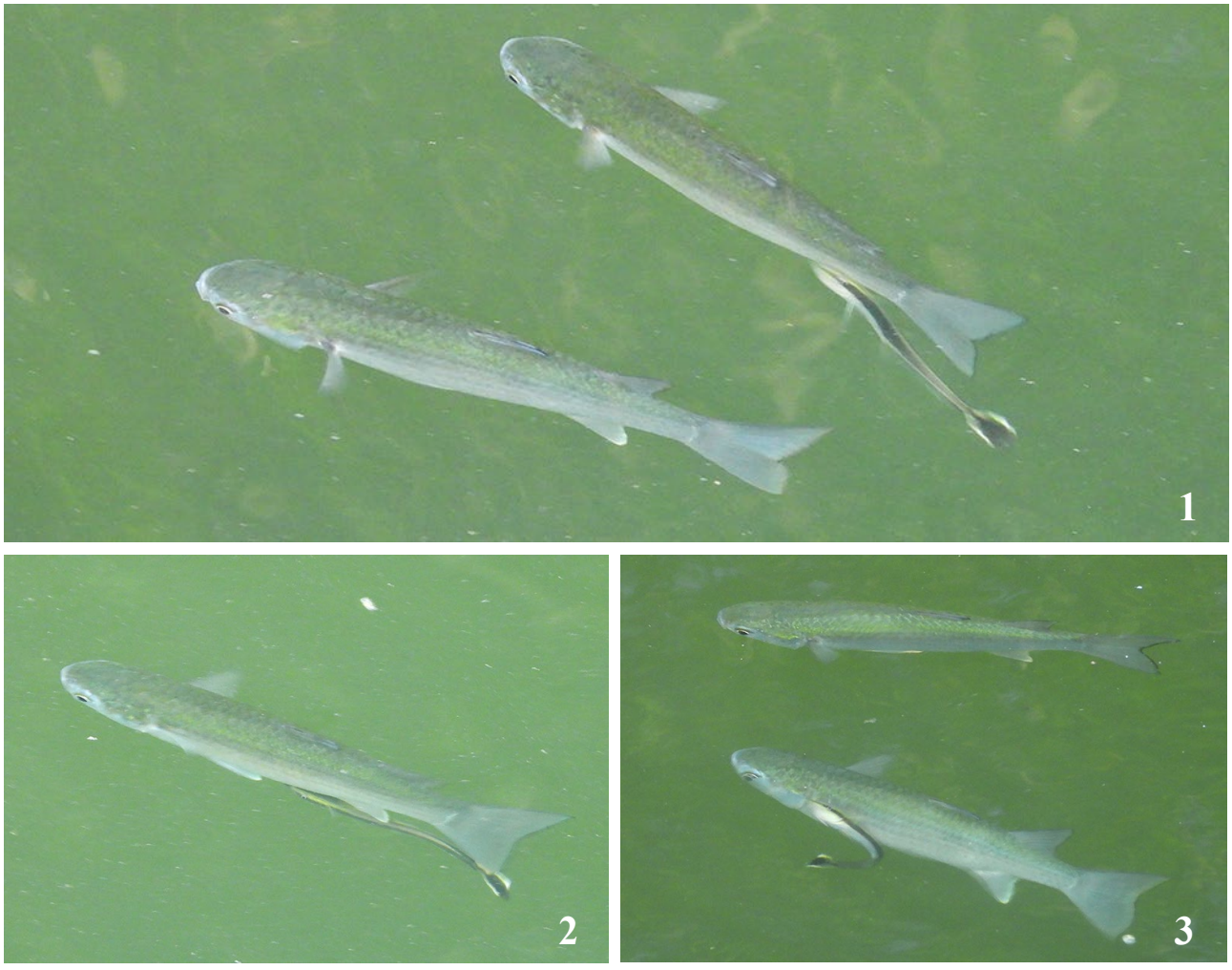

Fig. 1. In-situ dorso-lateral view of juvenile sharksucker attaching itself to a green mullet at 0855 hrs. Fig. 2. The same sharksucker attaching itself to the underside of another mullet at 0856 hrs. Fig. 3. Sharksucker moving to the side of a third mullet at 0858 hrs. (Photographs by: Wai Lun Cheong).

Observation: A juvenile sharksucker of about 10 cm total length was spotted attaching itself to a greenback mullet of about twice its length (Fig 1), then moving between nearby mullets multiple times (Figs. 2, 3). Despite the presence of other fishes (notably *Etroplus suratensis, Ambassis kopsii, Zenarchopterus buffonis*) and terrapins (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) in the vicinity, it did not attach to any other species within the estimated 5 minutes of observation.

Remarks: *Echeneis naucrates* is well-known for latching onto large fishes, turtles, and boats. Like other remoras, it feeds on parasitic copepods attached to its hosts and food scraps dropped by the host. Unlike most other remoras, it is often found free swimming and occurs in shallow inshore waters (Collette, 1999). Its occurrence in estuarine environments is not unusual for it has been recorded from the Johor Strait (Kimura et al., 2015; Ng et al., 2015). The featured observation is interesting because the small sharksucker appears to prefer mullets as its hosts. This could be related to the mullets' pelagic habits and the relatively greater amount of smooth body surface area that they offer compared to other fishes in the area. It is also possible that the sharksucker was looking for ectoparasites on the mullets.

Literature cited:

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