

Biodiversity Record: New Singapore record of the whiting, *Sillago asiatica*

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Subjects: Asian whiting, *Sillago asiatica* (Teleostei: Acanthuriformes: Sillaginidae).

Subjects identified by: Aidan Raphael Keh.

Location, date and time: Singapore Strait at Lazarus Island; 25 January 2026; around 1211 hrs.

Habitat: Marine. Sandy lagoon, at a depth of approximately 0.5 m.

Observers: Aidan Raphael Keh & Julian Sim.

Observations: Five examples ranging from 52.0 to 95.4 mm in standard length (measured from snout tip to caudal fin base) were caught with hook and line baited with whiteleg shrimp (*Litopenaeus vannamei*) meat. They were observed moving about in a shoal together with the congener *Sillago aeolus*, easily distinguished by blackish blotches on the sides, and disappeared when the tide receded significantly. The hooked specimens were donated to the Zoological Reference Collection of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, at the National University of Singapore, where they have been preserved as reference material under the catalogue number ZRC 69888.



Fig 1. Ex-situ lateral view of a live *Sillago asiatica* of about 90 mm standard length from Lazarus Island. (Photograph by: Aidan Raphael Keh).

Remarks: According to McKay (1992) the taxonomically complex genus *Sillago* can be split into two groups. The first with swimbladder divided posteriorly into two tapering extensions projecting below vertebral column into the tail musculature, and the second with a single posterior extension below vertebral column and entering the tail section. *Sillago asiatica* belongs to the second group, and is identifiable most notably by its swimbladder having one posterior extension (Fig. 3), and three anterior extensions with the middle one projecting forward and the anterolateral ones recurved backward along the swimbladder (Fig. 2).

This is the first record of *Sillago asiatica* in Singapore (see Fowler, 1938; Jaafar et al., 2024). It is the second species of the genus without dark blotches to be identified in the territory. Hitherto, *Sillago sihama* was the only uniformly silver species that is confirmed to occur in Singapore waters. It is very similar in appearance to *Sillago asiatica* but is distinguished by its swimbladder bearing two posterior extensions (see McKay, 1992). As *Sillago asiatica* is best distinguished from *Sillago sihama* by examining the swimbladder, which requires dissection, it seems highly likely that this species was previously overlooked.

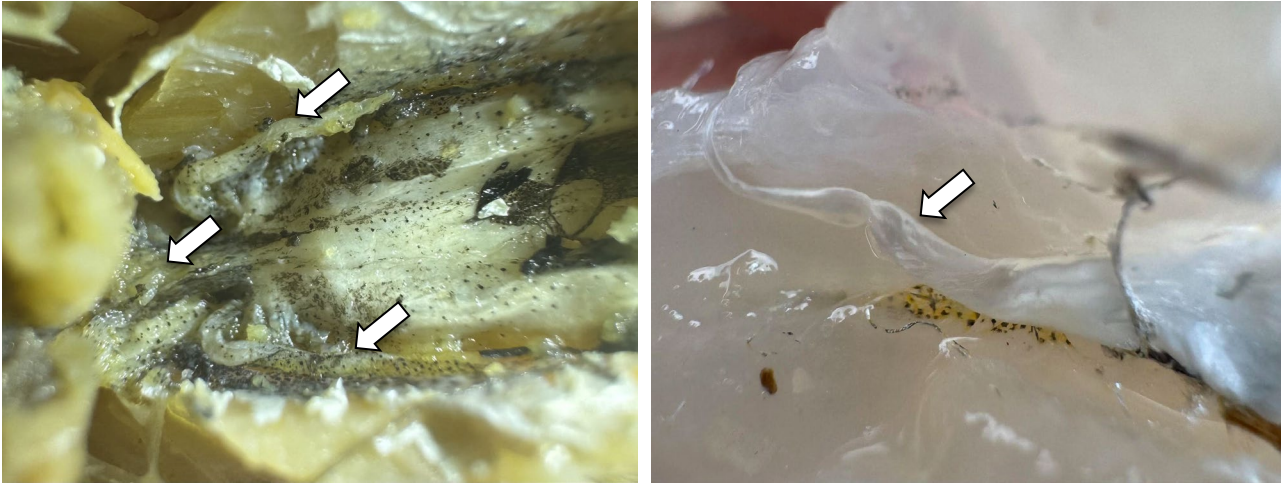


Fig 2. Anterior part of the swimbladder of a dissected *Sillago asiatica* showing the 3 anterior extensions (indicated by arrows). Fig 3. Posterior part of the swimbladder of the same fish showing the singular posterior extension (indicated by arrow). (Photographs by: Aidan Raphael Keh)

Literature cited:

- Fowler HW (1938) A list of the fishes known from Malaya. Fisheries Bulletin, Singapore, 1: 1–268, 296–268 (supplement).
- Jaafar Z, Low JKY & Lim KKP (2024) Checklist of marine fish species with their category of threat status for Singapore. In: Davison GWH, Gan JWM, Huang D, Hwang WS, Lum SKY & Yeo DCJ (eds.) The Singapore Red Data Book. Red Lists of Singapore Biodiversity. Third edition. National Parks Board, Singapore, pp. 649–670.
- McKay RJ (1992) FAO species catalogue. Vol. 14. Sillaginid fishes of the world (family Sillaginidae). An annotated and illustrated catalogue of the sillago, smelt or Indo-Pacific whiting species known to date. FAO Fisheries Synopsis, No. 125, Vol. 14. FAO, Rome, vi + 87 pp., 137 figs.