

Malayan brown snakes at Upper Seletar

Subjects: Malayan brown snake, *Xenelaphis hexagonotus* (Reptilia: Serpentes: Colubridae).

Subjects identified by: Contributor.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Central Catchment Nature Reserve, Upper Seletar Reservoir Park; 18 & 20 September 2005 and 2 October 2010.

Habitat: Small streams at the edge of freshwater swamp-forest.

Observer: Contributor.

Observations: Four separate records over three days, of at least three individuals in two streams feeding an area of freshwater swamp forest. The streams (labeled herein as 'stream 1' and 'stream 2') were about 100 m apart.

1) 18 September 2005 at 1738 hrs. A large example of about 1.5 m total length was observed submerged in water in stream 1 (Fig. 1).

2) 20 September 2005. At 1732 hrs, a large specimen of about 1.5 m total length encountered in stream 1 (Fig. 2) may be the same individual seen on 18 September 2005. Then, at 1747 hrs, a different, smaller individual of about 1 m total length specimen appeared at the same stream (Fig. 3).

3) 2 October 2010 at 1145 hrs and 1258 hrs. One example of around 1.2 m was photographed submerged in stream 2 (Fig. 4).

Remarks: According to Das (2012: 69), the Malayan brown snake grows to 2 m, and is associated with lowland (below 500 m above sea level) water-logged forests, especially coastal peat swamps and mangrove swamps. Its diet comprises rodents, frogs and fish. In Singapore, this snake has been found in mature forests where it enters water freely presumably to hunt large fish (Baker & Lim, 2012: 108; see Fig. 1-4). The species is seldom seen, and is regarded as locally endangered (Lim, 2008: 265 as *Xenelaphis hexagonatus*). The sightings of two different snakes at the same location on 20 September 2005 (Fig. 2 & 3) within 15 minutes of each other may indicate the occurrence of courtship activity.

References:

Baker, N. & K. K. P. Lim, 2012. *Wild Animals of Singapore. A Photographic Guide to Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians and Freshwater Fishes*. Reprint with corrections and updates. Draco Publishing and Distribution Pte. Ltd. and Nature Society (Singapore). 180 pp.

Das, I., 2012. *A Naturalist's Guide to the Snakes of South-east Asia*. John Beaufoy Publishing Limited, Oxford, England. 160 pp.

Lim, K. K. P., 2008. Checklists of threatened species - fishes, amphibians and reptiles. In: Davison, G. W. H., P. K. L. Ng & H. C. Ho (eds.). *The Singapore Red Data Book. Threatened Plants & Animals of Singapore. Second edition*. Nature Society (Singapore). pp. 263- 266.

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Fig. 1. 18 September 2005 at 1738 hrs.



Fig. 2. 20 September 2005 at 1732 hrs.

Photographs by Nick Baker



Fig. 3. 20 September 2005 at 1747 hrs.



Fig. 4. 2 October 2010 at 1258 hrs.

Photographs by Nick Baker