

SHORT REPORT

A ROADKILL RECORD OF A HAIRY-NOSED OTTER (*Lutra sumatrana*) FROM SELANGOR, PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

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Abstract: A fresh hairy-nosed otter roadkill was encountered along the Tanjung Malim-Sungei Besar Road in northern Selangor (Malaysia) in 2005. This appears to be the first fresh record of this elusive species from Selangor since 1929.

Keywords: Selangor, peat swamp forest, incidental road kill, *Lutra sumatrana*

INTRODUCTION

The hairy-nosed otter (*Lutra sumatrana*) is an elusive and rarely encountered animal throughout its native range in Southeast Asia (Wright et al., 2008). Within Peninsular Malaysia, formal records and published sightings of *L. sumatrana* had been recorded from areas close to aquatic habitats (e.g. peat swamps, forested riverine environments) in Perak and Pahang (Sebastian, 1995) and most recently in Taman Negara, Pahang (Baker, 2013).

DETAILS OF SIGHTING

On the morning of the 5th January 2005 around 0900 hrs, the author was travelling along the Tanjung Malim to Sungei Besar road, cutting through the remnant North Selangor peat swamp forest (Figure 1). At around mile stone km 41 to Sungei Besar, two dark forms were sighted along the road on a gentle bend. As the vehicle approached closer one dark form disappeared into the roadside vegetation, leaving the remaining dark form on the road. The vehicle was stopped and the author alighted to check the situation. The prone form turned out to be a recent incidental road kill of an otter, of about 1.2 metres in length, with a large pool of fresh semi-coagulated blood pool around the anterior half (Figure 2-3).

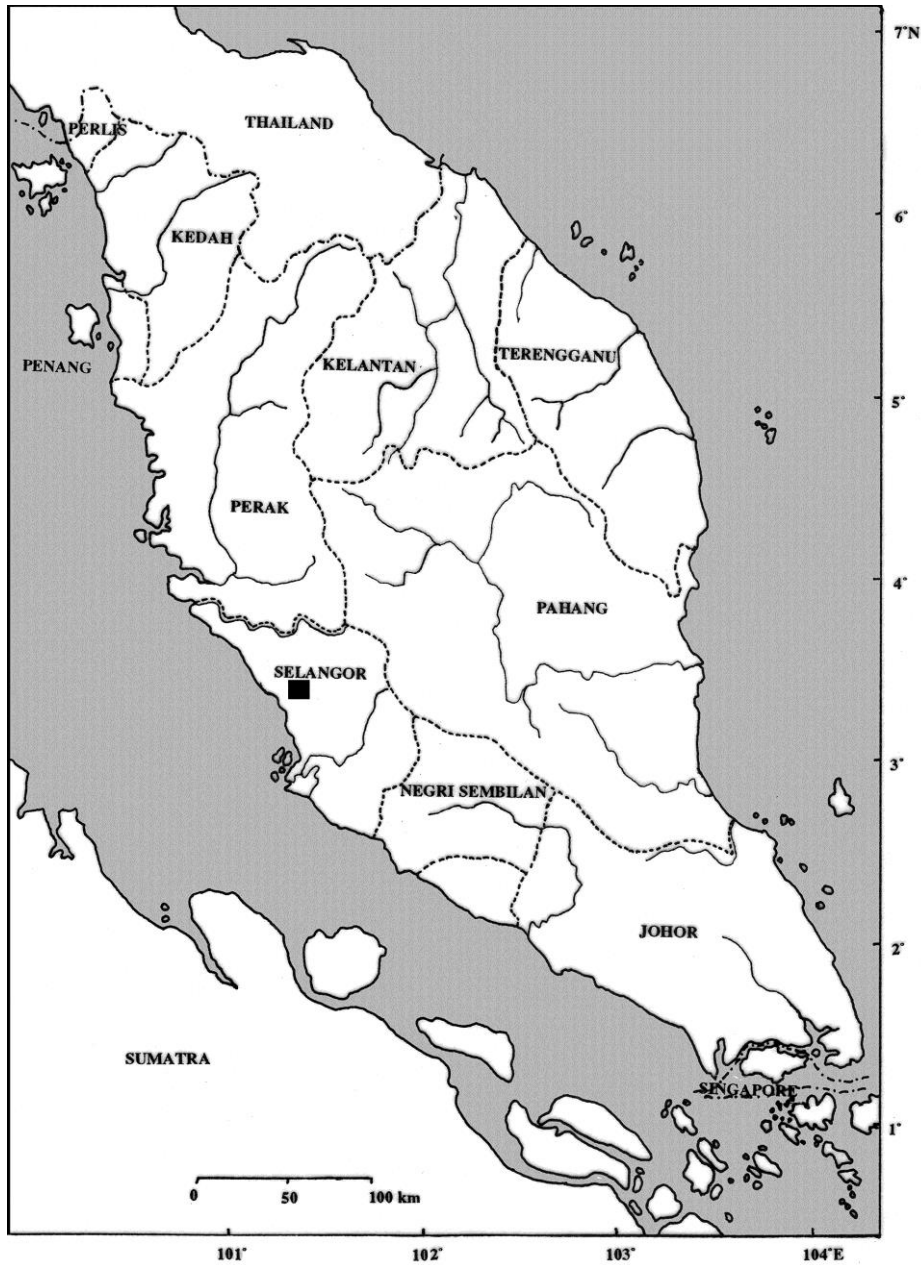


Figure 1. Map of Peninsular Malaysia showing the approximate location (black square) of the road kill sighting.

The freshly dead road kill appeared to be a female hairy-nosed otter, as there was no visible sign of testicles between the base of the hind limbs near the anus. It had a hairy rhinarium, though the diagnostic pale lips, chin and neck region were largely obscured by blood; plus a flattened lateral profile of the head. The identity was verified later by a check using Payne & Francis, 1985; Kanchanasakha et al., 1998; Francis, 2008, and personal communications with Yong D. C. G., Lim K. K. P. and Sivasothi N. (2005).

The site of the road kill is less than four meters away from the nearest water source, a black water creek running parallel to the road, at the edge of remnant peat swamp forest. As the pelage on the otter appears to be wet, it could be that the otter was run over while recently out of the creek. This remnant forest had been degraded, as large sections had been converted to oil palm plantations. The other otter which had earlier moved off was probably an offspring or its mate, but had remained nearby its fallen counterpart.



Figure 2. *Lutra sumatrana* fresh road kill, possible female ca. 1.2 m length, on road Tanjung Malim-Sungei Besar, 5th January 2005.



Figure 3. Close-up of head region of *Lutra sumatrana* fresh road kill, possible female ca. 1.2 m length, on road Tanjung Malim-Sungei Besar, 5th January 2005.

DISCUSSION

This appears to be the first fresh record of *Lutra sumatrana* in Selangor since 1929. There is a skull deposited in the Zoological Reference Collection (of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum) of a male *L. sumatrana* (ZRC 4.1231), collected from 7th mile Cheras in Selangor dated 1929. However, the unfortunate circumstances highlight the conflict between anthropogenic influences vs. wildlife. As intact forests (in this case, peat swamp forest) get fragmented, wildlife gets displaced

and is forced into situations where natural passage ways are attenuated and fatal situations typically occur for wildlife.

Since 2005, the author had been back to the same area twice and the situation had deteriorated even more. The black water creek has had been replaced by a man-made ditch draining the remnant swamp, the peat swamp forest patches have been further fragmented, and the area for oil palm plantations had increased.

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RÉSUMÉ

ENREGISTREMENT D'UNE LOUTRE DE SUMATRANA (*Lutra sumatrana*) ECRASEE AU SELANGOR DANS LA PENINSULE MALAISIENNE.

Une Loutre de sumatrana fraîchement écrasée a été trouvée le long de la route Tanjung Malim-Sungei Besar dans le Nord du Selangor en 2005, en Malaisie. Cela constitue être le premier enregistrement récent de cette espèce insaisissable au Selangor depuis 1929.

RESUMEN

REGISTRO DE UNA NUTRIA DE SUMATRA (*Lutra Sumatrana*) ATROPELLADA, EN SELANGOR, PENÍNSULA MALAYA

Se encontró una nutria sumatrana recién atropellada, en la Ruta Tanjung Malim-Sungei Besar, en el norte de Selangor (Malasia) en 2005. Parece ser el primer registro actual de esta elusiva especie en Selangor, desde 1929.