

Rare animals of 2022: First record of a giant click beetle in S'pore

This year, Singapore logged the island's first record of a giant click beetle and the second sighting of a rare emerald green cockroach – one of two kinds of cockroaches in the world of that hue.

The Sunday Times highlights four notable records of recent animal sightings reported in the second half of 2022 in Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum's journal *Nature in Singapore*.

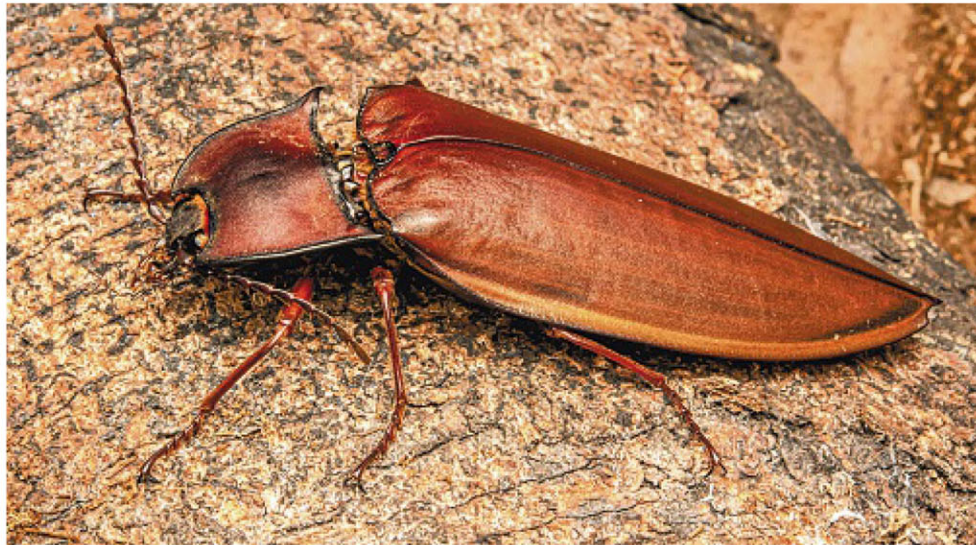
GIANT CLICK BEETLE

While common in Malaysia and Indonesia, the giant click beetle was not recorded in Singapore until it was found on the night of Oct 16 in Upper Seletar.

The 7cm-long beetle had been crawling along a roadside kerb near the edge of the secondary forest when it was first spotted by civil servant Elaine Lui, who was combing the area for wildlife.

Click beetles are named for the clicking sound produced by the snapping of their spine, which startles potential predators and lets these beetles escape from being eaten.

The discovery comes as giant stag or rhinoceros beetle species, which used to be found frequently in Singapore, have all but disappeared in recent decades, said colorectal surgeon Isaac Seow-En, who had rushed down to the scene and identified the beetle as a female.



This finding suggests that Singapore's remnant forests can support these big beetles, which tend to be more sensitive to habitat loss, pollution and insecticide.

He said: "With increasing light pollution on our small island, beetles often fly to urbanised areas at night, getting crushed by traffic or killed by people who are frightened of their appearance, particularly for large species. These beetles are actually harmless."

GREEN COCKROACH

The Republic's second record of a rare green cockroach was found on July 22 by motion graphics designer Bryan Seah.

He had been trying to avoid cockroaches after one – of a different

species – had landed on his mouth the night before.

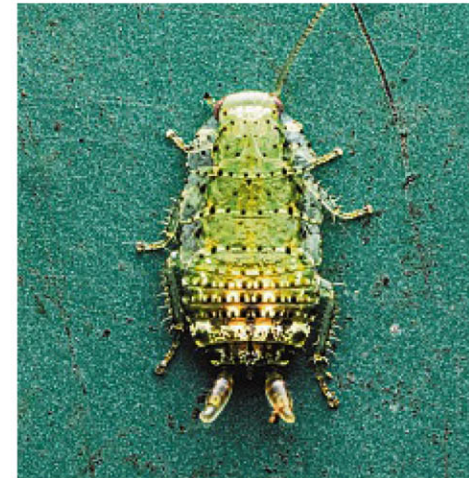
He said he was in a part of Old Upper Thomson Road known to have cockroaches and was about to keep his distance, but something green and shiny caught his eye.

Thinking it was a beetle, Mr Seah took a few photos of the 5mm-long nymph after letting it crawl on his palm and sent them to his friends for identification.

He said: "I started getting calls to go back and find it because it is one of the rarest cockroaches in Singapore."

The emerald green cockroach was first documented here in 2021.

The only other green cockroach in the world is the green banana cockroach, which is found only in the Americas.



From left: Notable animal sightings include the giant click beetle, the nymph of an emerald green cockroach, an adult Sunda pangolin and a leopard cat. PHOTOS: ISAAC SEOW-EN, BRYAN SEAH, GRETCHEN COFFMAN, CHIOK WEN XUAN

SUNDA PANGOLIN

The start of the year marked the first documented record of a lone Sunda pangolin in Singapore Botanic Gardens after the adult was captured on a trail camera.

The sighting is a positive sign for the National University of Singapore's (NUS) research into the long-term success of restored wetlands in the Singapore Botanic Gardens for wildlife, said Dr Gretchen Coffman, principal investigator of the project.

Mr Lewis Kwek, NUS geography student and the field research coordinator for the project, said that globally, the species is critically endangered, with only an estimated 1,046 of the mammal left in Singapore.

Said Dr Coffman: "As the National Parks Board strives to transform Singapore into a 'City in Nature', this Sunda pangolin sighting gives us hope that people and wildlife can coexist together."

In Singapore's highly urbanised landscape, the major threat to Sunda pangolins seems to be traffic incidents, as well as habitat reduction, she said.

LEOPARD CAT

Yet another location for Singapore's last remaining wild cat has been logged after the leopard cat and its excrement was found at Kranji Marshes in December 2021.

The observation, published on Oct 31, is important for mapping out the distribution of the critically en-

dangered feline, which has had sparse records throughout the years, said ecologist Chiok Wen Xuan, who recorded videos of the cat on camera traps.

The presence of the leopard cat in Kranji Marshes further supports NParks' focus on safeguarding complementary wetland habitats by linking Kranji Marshes to Kranji Coastal Nature Park and Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, the wildlife trade researcher noted.

The mixed-habitat structure within Kranji Marshes, which includes grasslands and swamps, also provides multiple niches for wetland specialists and endangered terrestrial mammals alike, and this highlights the importance of ecological corridors to these creatures.

Ang Qing