

Mangrove Skink *Emoia atrocostata* on a rocky beach at Sedili, Johor, Peninsular Malaysia

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Identity of subject: Mangrove Skink, *Emoia atrocostata* (Reptilia: Sauria: Scincidae).

Observers: Nick Baker, Tony O'Dempsey

Photographs by: Nick Baker.

Subjects identified by: Nick Baker.

Location: Sedili, Johor, Peninsular Malaysia. (Lat 1° 56.98'N Long 104° 7.10'E).

Elevation: Sea-level.

Habitat: Rocky beach.

Date and time: (i) 29 October 2007, 17:16 hrs. (ii) 04 January 2008, 11:03 hrs.

Description of record: (i) On 29 October 2007 a single specimen of *Emoia atrocostata* was photographed as it traversed an area of sand between two rock outcrops (Fig. 1). (ii) On 04 January 2008 two specimens were observed on rock outcrops in the same location as record (i), apparently basking in the sun (Fig. 2). In both cases, the skinks were easily disturbed and could only be photographed from a distance before they sought shelter in rock crevices.



Fig. 1.

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Fig. 2.

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Remarks : *Emoia atrocostata* occurs in a variety of intertidal habitats including mangrove and rocky shore, however in the latter setting the rocky shore must be backed by vegetation (Grismer, 2011) : this is the case along the coastline in the vicinity of these records.

The location of this find is at the rocky, northern end of a 500-metre long, mainly sandy beach. The geology comprises varied sedimentary rocks (sandstone, conglomerate) with steeply dipping beds: this is a complex substrate with a wide variety of rock textures and numerous crevices. North of this beach the coastline is rocky for two kilometres or more, and south of this beach the coastline comprises a series of smaller beaches with rocky foreshore.

Although *Emoia atrocostata* is widespread in coastal Southeast Asia (including the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia) these records may be the first from the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia (excluding islands of the Seribu Archipelago) : Grismer (2011) states that the species is "conspicuously absent from the east coast ... some of this however may be a collecting artifact because at times these lizards are very hard to find". It is possible, therefore, that more intensive searches of rocky coastal habitats along the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia may reveal the presence of this species.

Emoia atrocostata is known from Singapore: specimens in the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, National University of Singapore, include examples from the islands of Pulau Ayer Merbau, Pulau Senang and Pulau Sudong, which all lie to the south of Singapore Island, as well as Tuas on the main island (Kelvin K. P. Lim, pers. comm.). The author has also photographed a pair of the species at Sungei Buloh, in the northwest of Singapore Island, on mixed substrate comprising a rocky bund, and adjacent sandy foreshore.

References:

Grismer, L. L. (2011). *Lizards of Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore, and their Adjacent Archipelagos. Their Description, Distribution, and Natural History.* Edition Chimaira, Frankfurt am Main. 728 pp.