

Observation of the Asian Grass Lizard, *Takydromus sexlineatus* Daudin, 1802 (Squamata: Lacertidae), swimming across a river in Sumatra, Indonesia

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The Asian Grass Lizard *Takydromus sexlineatus* Daudin, 1802 is a wide-ranging Asian lizard species that occurs in India, China, Southeast Asia, and Indonesia (Das, 2015). This species is classified as Least Concern in view of its wide tolerance to varied habitats, including urban areas, and no major threats have been documented (Wogan et al., 2021). *Takydromus sexlineatus* has been known inhabit farmland with various crops, such as rice (*Oryza sativa*), banana (*Musa paradisiaca*), cassava (*Manihot esculenta*), chrysanthus (*Chrysanthemum* sp.), guava (*Psidium guajava*), coconut (*Cocos nucifera*), rambutan (*Nephelium lappaceum*), durian (*Durio zibethinus*), and Australian finger lime (*Citrus australasica*), where there are often many weeds (Hawkeswood and Sommung, 2017). On Sumatra, this species is common and is often encountered in grasslands, open land areas, forest edges (including mangrove forest), and plantations (Prasetyo, 2016a, b; Kusri, 2020).

On 3 February 2022 at 10:00 h, during a field survey along the Merang River (Fig. 1) near Merang Village, Bayung Lencir, Musi Banyuasin, South Sumatra Province, Indonesia (2.1070°S, 104.2378°E; elevation 10 m), we observed a single *T. sexlineatus* swimming in the middle of Merang River. This river flows through peat swamp forest, the last large peat dome remaining in southern Sumatra (part of the Peat Hydrological Unit that lies on an elevated area compared to its surrounding peatland; Solichin et al., 2011). The river is about 20 m wide, placing it in the category of a medium-sized river (Maryono, 2005).

We identified the lizard as *T. sexlineatus* based on the following distinct characters: head long (at least as long as wide), small with a sharply pointed snout; body slightly elongated, a long tail (tail between three and five times as long as body, but usually three times of body length); and dorsum olive brown or brown with a green stripe from eyes to base of tail (Das, 2004, 2015; Uetz et al., 2022). These features are distinct characters for *T. sexlineatus* compared to other lizards found at lowland habitats in South Sumatra (Origina et al., 2012; Saptalisa et al., 2015; Yuliani, 2021). Furthermore, we have published other work on this particular species (Prasetyo, 2016a, b).

Many species of *Takydromus* are considered arboreal (about a third of the species in the genus) and the remainder are terrestrial grass-swimmers that propel themselves through low vegetation (Rodda, 2020). *Takydromus sexlineatus* inhabits grasslands and marshes, associated with open areas especially in the lowlands and mid-elevation hills from sea level to 850 m elevation (Das, 2004, 2015). Our observation of *T. sexlineatus* swimming in a river is unusual behaviour for this species. It is presumed that this lizard was swimming to either avoid or escape from a predator. As with other many lizards, *T. sexlineatus* will attempt to escape from danger by running to a place of safety (Cooper, 2010; Guerrero-Sanchez, 2019). Some lizards, such as *Varanus salvator* (Laurenti, 1768), are known to be excellent swimmers (Stanner, 2010), although this is not the case for *T. sexlineatus*. By using its tail, hands and body, *V. salvator* are known to cover considerable distance and have been reported at sea (Bennett, 1995; Iyai and Runtuboi, 2019). In our observation, *T. sexlineatus* swam with the head above the surface of water, the legs were nearly motionless, but the tail was moved rapidly from side to side. The presence of the long tail means that *T. sexlineatus* is able to swim effectively in the water, although this terrestrial lizard probably only rarely encounters water.

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Figure 1. Location where the single *Takydromus sexlineatus* was observed swimming across the Merang River, Musi Banyuasin District, South Sumatra Province, Indonesia. Photo by Muhammad Iqbal.

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