

1822

## Hung on the jawi-jawi tree

### William Farquhar, his dog and the crocodile

“One morning Mr. Farquhar was walking in the direction of the Rochor River taking his dog with him, and when the dog went down to the river for water, suddenly it was seized by a crocodile. Immediately Mr. Farquhar was told that his dog had been eaten by a crocodile, and he called some men who were there and told them to make a dam across the river; when this had been done, the crocodile was enclosed, and was stabbed to death; it was 3 fathoms in lengths (18'). Then for the first time people knew that there were crocodiles at Singapore. Mr. Farquhar had the carcase of the crocodile taken and hung on the ‘jawi-jawi’ tree which is on the bank of the Beras Basah River.”

— Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir (Munshi Abdullah)

1822.1



William Farquhar (1774–1839) is Singapore’s first British Resident and like Raffles ♣️1820 he has a keen interest in natural history. This is another source of enmity between both men. The loss of Farquhar’s dog is one of the earliest published accounts of crocodiles in Singapore but there will be other known encounters between humans and crocodiles ♣️1886. Farquhar later treats a man who stabs him in 1823 in the same way as the crocodile. The ‘jawi-jawi’ tree is possibly a species of *Ficus* tree. The approximate date of this incident is 1822.

♣️ 1822

1840

1860

1880

1900

1920

1940

1960

1980

2000

1822.2



1822.3



1822.1

This depiction of a crocodile being caught with a gorge or ‘alir’ is from 1885

1822.2

This dog skull is collected in 2010 at Kranji in Singapore. The dog paw is also from Singapore. The Museum holds material from many animals, including domesticated ones ♣️1836 as they can be useful for comparative study

1822.3

William Farquhar (1774–1839), Singapore’s first British resident and commandant is in constant conflict with Raffles. Their passion for natural history is another source tension tension (see Part 1)

# Part 7 Hunters, Trappers and Traders

## Early Human-Wildlife Interaction in Singapore

With the growth of the town of Singapore and the conversion of jungle for agriculture, it is only a matter of time before humans and animals come into conflict. Attacks on humans by tigers are the most well-known example. Just one hundred years separate the first reported fatal human-tiger encounter ♣1831 and the final fatal tiger-human encounter ♣1930. But before this century ends, hunters comment on the rarity of tigers. In the three years he spends in Singapore in the 1840s, Douglas Hamilton ♣1870 does not once encounter a tiger. George P. Owen ♣1900 attributes the poor hunting in Singapore to “all-conquering rubber”. Tigers are not the only animals to cause human fatalities. Crocodiles ♣1886 and sharks ♣1967 both cause human fatalities.

Another development during the nineteenth century is the rise of the live animal trade. As with shells being traded in Singapore (see Part 4), most of these animals are brought to Singapore for sale. The origins of the animal trade are said to begin with a mysterious character by the name of Haji Marip ♣1880, though it is likely to precede him. The collector and taxidermist William T. Hornaday ♣1885 witnesses this trade firsthand when he visits Singapore. He later becomes a staunch wildlife protection advocate. The same is also true of Paul and Fritz Sarasin ♣1902, two Swiss cousins who come east to hunt and collect. They are later instrumental in the origins of what is today the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). When they visit Singapore, the cousins meet a wildlife trader at Omar Road. Perhaps no one symbolises the live animal trade more than Frank Buck ♣1982. Certainly, no one does more to romanticise it than him. Buck visits Singapore on more than one occasion and Singapore is the setting for one of his films.

### 7.1

Many of the large animals that are killed by hunters are mounted for display and require substitute eyes. Before the advent of plastic, glass eyes provide unrivalled replacements. This advertisement is from an 1883 book on taxidermy

1886

## Carried away by a huge alligator

### Crocodiles and humans in Singapore

“On Monday a Malay woman whilst picking clams on the side of the river in Ponggol, was seized and carried away by a huge alligator. No trace of the unfortunate woman has as yet been found.” — **Anonymous**

1886.1



1886.1

A Saltwater Crocodile skull (*Crocodylus porosus* Schneider, 1801). These animals are often referred to as “alligators” by early travellers to Southeast Asia

The “alligator” is the name given to the Saltwater (or Estuarine) Crocodile by early Europeans in Asia. The term “boa” is similarly in use for the Reticulated Python 🌿1879. Although crocodiles do not have the same fearsome reputation as tigers 🌿1840, 1870, crocodile attacks are nonetheless reported in the newspapers. The number of human fatalities due to crocodiles is much smaller than that attributable to tigers. Between 1842 and 1946, crocodiles kill 13 people while tigers kill 211 people between 1831 and 1930. This attack in Punggol occurs on 15 February 1886.

#### 1886.2

These two species of clams are sometimes collected for food in Singapore and may have been those that the lady at Punggol is picking on that fateful day in 1886. The larger species is the Common Geloina, *Geloina coaxans* (Gmelin, 1791), while the smaller one is the Japan Venus, *Marcia japonica* (Gmelin, 1791)



1886.2



1820

1840

1860

🌿 1886

1900

1920

1940

1960

1980

2000



George Paddison Owen (1850–1928) comes to Singapore in 1879 and holds various positions at the fire brigade, as superintendent of rabies and various sporting clubs. He is well-known as an able hunter of tigers as the accompanying photographs show. A 4.7-metre-long Estuarine Crocodile that is killed by Owen in 1887 is now at the Museum. In a chapter in ‘One Hundred Years of Singapore’, Owen laments that the march of rubber plantations ends the sport of hunting, or ‘shikar’. Owen himself gives up hunting due to trouble with his eyesight in May 1900.

1820

1840

1860

1880

🌿 1900

1920

1940

1960

1980

2000



1968

## Crocodile-infested no more

### Land reclamation in Singapore

“Singapore’s first industrial estate is located in Jurong. Before its transformation into an industrial estate, Jurong was a landscape covered in forest and swamp, with crocodile-infested rivers. There were also fish and prawn ponds. Reclamation work began in the 1960s. Swampland was reclaimed using earth obtained from the levelling of hills in the area. Subsequently, land was also reclaimed in Tuas and the southern islands. In the 1990s, work commenced to combine the southern islands to form Jurong Island, with the objective of creating a petrochemicals hub. The task of developing Jurong was initially undertaken by the Economic and Development Board, but the Jurong Town Corporation (JTC) was founded in 1968 to oversee the continued industrialisation and management of the estate.” — **Marsita Omar**

1968.1

This view of the Jurong Industrial Estate area is taken on 31 July 1966

