

Flying squirrels attracted to fruiting *Quercus gemelliflora* at Fraser's Hill, Peninsular Malaysia

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Photographs by: Nick Baker.

Fauna identified by: Nick Baker.

Flora identified by: Ali Ibrahim.

Location: Fraser's Hill ('Bukit Fraser'), Peninsular Malaysia.

Elevation: 1300 metres.

Habitat: Lower montane, primary forest.

Date: 21-24 May 2015

Identity of subjects and descriptions of observation:

- 1) Spotted Giant Flying Squirrel, *Petaurista elegans* (Mammalia: Rodentia: Sciuridae),
Up to 5 seen between dusk and midnight, each night from 21 to 24 May 2015.
- 2) Horsfield's Flying Squirrel, *Iomys horsfieldii* (Mammalia: Rodentia: Sciuridae),
Around 20 seen between dusk and midnight on 21 May 2015. Fewer than 5 seen or heard each night from 22 to 24 May.

Remarks: Two species of flying squirrel were observed on four consecutive nights, attracted to an abundance of acorns in a tall *Quercus gemelliflora*, a species of oak which occurs in upland areas of Peninsular Malaysia. Up to 5 adult *Petaurista elegans* were seen each night from 21 to 24 May 2015, feasting on acorns. *Iomys horsfieldii* were also observed, being particularly numerous on 21 May 2015 when up to 20 were seen gliding into the oak tree from the surrounding forest. Both squirrel species were highly vocal : the larger species, *Petaurista elegans*, was heard calling with quiet squeaks, whilst the smaller species, *Iomys horsfieldii* called with a characteristic sharp, downwardly-inflected 'bark'.

Weather conditions at the time of these sightings were variable. On the evening of 21 May 2015 there was no rain, however from 22 to 24 May 2015 there was intermittent rain in the evening. A new moon occurred on 19 May 2015.

Francis (2008) lists 11 species of flying squirrel as extant in Peninsular Malaysia. *Petaurista elegans* is considered to occur more often at higher elevations, but *Iomys horsfieldii* is also common in lowland forests.

The oak species was identified as *Quercus gemelliflora* based on comparison of photographs of the leaves and acorns with drawings in Whitmore (1972). Three other oak trees, which appeared to be of the same species, were fruiting in the immediate vicinity at the same time.

Reference:

- Francis, C. M. (2008). *A Field Guide to the Mammals of South-East Asia*. New Holland Publishers (UK) Ltd. 392 pp.
- Whitmore, T. C. (1972). *Tree Flora of Malaya: a Manual for Foresters, Vol. 1*. Longman Group Ltd. 339 pp.



Fig. 1. *Petaurista elegans* consuming an acorn.

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Fig. 2. *Iomys horsfieldii* glides in from the surrounding forest.

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