

Large Black Flying Squirrel *Aeromys tephromelas* on *Calophyllum* sp. at Gunung Arong, Johor, Peninsular Malaysia

Nick BAKER
nbaker@ecologyasia.com

Observer: Nick Baker.

Photograph by: Nick Baker.

Fauna identified by: Nick Baker.

Flora identified by: S. K. Y. Lum.

Location: Jalan Air Papan - Tanjung Resang, Gunung Arong Forest Reserve, Johor, Peninsular Malaysia.

Habitat: Lowland, tall secondary forest.

Date and time: 02 June 2014, 20:05 hrs.

Identity of subject: Large Black Flying Squirrel, *Aeromys tephromelas* (Mammalia: Rodentia: Sciuridae).

Description of observation: One adult was observed around 25 metres from the ground, on a narrow branch of a fruiting tree, on the northern side of the Air Papan to Tanjung Resang road (Fig 1.).

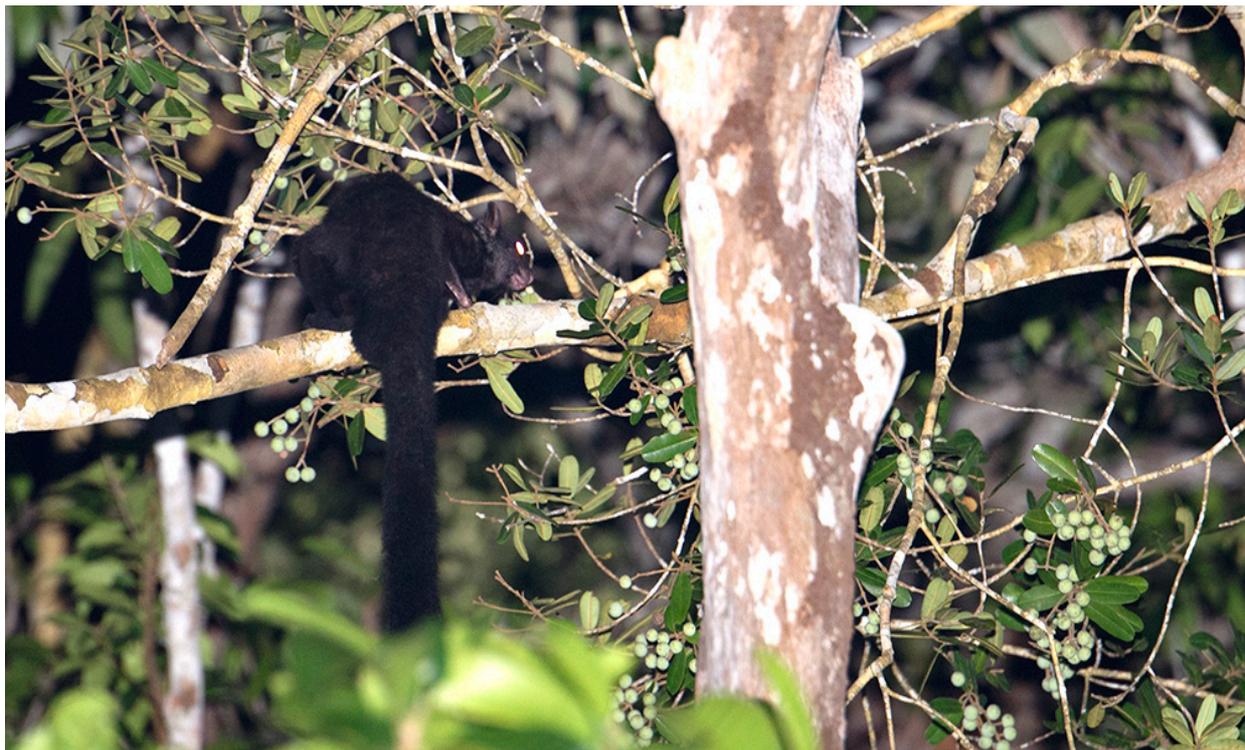


Fig. 1.

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Remarks : The body size and black pelage on all visible parts of the body identifies this squirrel as *Aeromys tephromelas*. In Peninsular Malaysia, this is one of the largest of the 11 extant flying squirrels, with males weighing around 1068 grams and females 1253 grams : this is exceeded only by the Red Giant Flying Squirrel *Petaurista petaurista*, the males of which weigh around 1264 and females 1405 grams (Thorington et al, 2012).

The fruiting tree is a species of *Calophyllum*, known locally as 'Bintangor' : the leaf size, shape and scurfiness of the branch apices suggest *Calophyllum ferrugineum* Ridley, a common species in lowland forest, especially where periodic drying of the forest occurs (S. K. Y. Lum pers. comm.) The squirrel spent some minutes looking in different directions, and was possibly seeking ripe fruits (i.e. brown). Nearly all of the fruits on the tree in question were unripe (i.e. green), and the squirrel was not observed consuming any of these.

The roads which connect the coastal settlements of Air Papan and Tanjung Resang with each other, and with the main highway connecting the towns of Mersing and Endau, fragment the Gunung Arong Forest Reserve into a number of parcels. At the sighting location, on the road from Air Papan to Tanjung Resang, the forest on both sides of the road has an abrupt edge with little secondary growth (Fig. 2.). The distance between the two forest fragments on either side of the road is estimated to be at least 50 metres, which may limit the ability of some gliding mammals to traverse.

Francis (2008) indicates a range for *Aeromys tephromelas* which includes southern Thailand, Peninsular Malaysia, Sumatra and Borneo. To our knowledge, within Peninsular Malaysia this record is the southernmost documented for the species. It is not included by Yong (2006) in the mammal species list compiled for (Gunung) Panti Forest Reserve, which lies around 80 kilometres to the south, and it has never been recorded in Singapore.



Fig. 2.

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References:

- Francis, C. M. (2008). *A Field Guide to the Mammals of South-East Asia*. New Holland Publishers (UK) Ltd. 392 pp.
- Thorington Jr., Koprowski, R.W., Steele, J.L., Whatton, J. F. (2012). *Squirrels of the World*. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore. 459 pp.
- Yong, D. L. (2006). Preliminary list of larger vertebrates of Panti Forest Reserve, South Johore (2002–2006). *Singapore Avifauna*, 20(1), 26-35.