

Long-tailed Macaque feeding on horseshoe crab *Tachypleus gigas* at Tanjung Piai, Johor, Peninsular Malaysia

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Photographs by: Andie Ang.
Subjects identified by: Andie Ang, Hsu Chia Chi.

Location: Tanjung Piai National Park, Johor, Peninsular Malaysia.
Habitat: Coastal mangrove forest.
Date and time: 27 December 2015, 12:30 hrs.

Identity of subjects:

- 1) Long-tailed Macaque, *Macaca fascicularis* (Mammalia: Primates: Cercopithecidae)
- 2) Coastal Horseshoe Crab, *Tachypleus gigas* (Merostomata: Xiphosura: Limulidae).

Description of observation: A male *Macaca fascicularis* was observed picking up a *Tachypleus gigas* from the shallow water beneath a mangrove tree, near the entrance to the visitor centre of Tanjung Piai National Park. The macaque then climbed up the tree, with the horseshoe crab in one hand, sat on a branch and began breaking apart the carapace using both hands. It then fed on the horseshoe crab for approximately 10 minutes (Figs. 1 and 2.).



Fig. 1.

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Remarks: *Macaca fascicularis* has several common names : while “Long-tailed Macaque” refers to its long tail which is often longer than its body, its other name, “Crab-eating Macaque”, refers to its preference in some areas for foraging for crabs along beaches and in mangrove forests. The species is known to have a broad, omnivorous, opportunistic diet : Francis (2008) summarizes the natural diet of the species as "mostly ripe fruits, and a wide array of animal material including insect, frogs' eggs, crabs and other coastal invertebrates".

The term 'horseshoe crab' is a misnomer : these invertebrates are xiphosurids, which is an ancient group of arthropods unrelated to crustaceans. The size, and carapace colour of the horseshoe crab in these images clearly identifies the species as *Tachypleus gigas*, a xiphosurid which ranges widely in Southeast Asia where suitable habitat is present, including coastal mangrove (Sekiguchi & Shuster, 2009).

Tanjung Piai is an area of 526 hectares of protected mangrove in the Pontian District of Johor State, Peninsular Malaysia. It lies at the extreme southern tip of the Southeast Asia mainland, immediately west of Singapore. It was designated a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention in 2003.



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.

Sekiguchi, K., & Shuster, C. N. Jr. (2009). Limits on the Global Distribution of Horseshoe Crabs (Limulacea): Lessons Learned from Two Lifetimes of Observations: Asia and America. In *Biology and Conservation of Horseshoe Crabs* Springer US. pp. 5-24.