

***Rousettus* sp. feeding on ripe bananas at Phuket, southern Thailand**

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Observer: Nick Baker.

Photographs by: Nick Baker.

Subjects identified by: B. P. Y. H. Lee, Pipat Soisook.

Location: Hills behind Kamala Beach, Phuket, southern Thailand.

Elevation: 60 metres.

Habitat: Cultivated forest clearing with scattered fruit trees (Fig. 1.), including banana and *Parkia speciosa*.

Date and time: 02 July 2016, 21:20 to 21:40 hrs.

Identity of subjects: *Rousettus* sp. (Mammalia: Chiroptera: Pteropodidae). Tentatively either Geoffroy's Rousette *Rousettus amplexicaudatus* or Leschenault's Rousette *Rousettus leschenaultii*.

Description of record: An estimated eight individuals were observed feeding on the ripest fruits of a clump of cultivated bananas, at a height of 2.5 metres from the ground. Each bat would swoop down into the banana tree, sometimes hovering for a few seconds (Fig. 2.) before landing on the chosen banana to feed for 2 or 3 seconds (Figs. 3 and 4.) before flying off again. Occasional vocalisation was heard, which comprised a loud squeaking sound. After observing and photographing the bats for 20 minutes on 02 July 2016, they were then left undisturbed. On the subsequent night of 03 July 2016 a repeat visit was made to the same location, but the bats were not seen.



Fig. 1.

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Fig. 2.

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Fig. 3.

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Fig. 4.

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Fig. 5.

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Remarks: These bats are identified as *Rousettus* sp. based on their size, the presence of a distinct tail (Fig. 5.) and an elongated rostrum (Fig. 4.). Some variability in fur colour is apparent, ranging from orange brown to greyish brown to yellowish brown on different parts of the body and in different individuals.

It is not possible to identify these bats to species level on the basis of photographs alone. Based on known ranges, however, these bats are likely to be either *Rousettus amplexicaudatus* or *Rousettus leschenaultii*.

Rousettus amplexicaudatus is wide-ranging in Southeast Asia, including Thailand, Burma and Peninsular Malaysia (Rookmaaker & Bergmans, 1981). *Rousettus leschenaultii* is equally wide-ranging in the region, including Thailand and neighbouring Burma (Bates & Helgen, 2008).

A brief review of available literature reveals that the fruits of the banana *Musa* sp. may form part of the diet of *Rousettus* spp., however original, primary information on the topic appears limited. Vanlalnghaka (2015), however, clearly documented the year round consumption of banana fruits by *Rousettus leschenaultii* in the Lengteng Wildlife Sanctuary, northeast India.

References:

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- Vanlalnghaka, C. (2015). Seasonal variation in the diet of the frugivorous bat, *Rousettus leschenaultii*. *Science Vision* 15:3.