

## Red-cheeked Flying Squirrel *Hylopetes spadiceus* at Pulau Tioman, Peninsular Malaysia

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**Photograph by:** Serin Subaraj.

**Subject identified by:** Robert Teo.

**Location:** Gunung Kajang, Pulau Tioman, Pahang, Peninsular Malaysia.

**Elevation:** 100 metres

**Habitat:** Primary lowland forest.

**Date and time:** 08 September 2016, 01:04 hrs

**Identity of subject:** Red-cheeked Flying Squirrel, *Hylopetes spadiceus* (Mammalia: Rodentia: Sciuridae).

**Description of record:** One adult observed active on a tree trunk up to 5 metres from the ground. It was seen to inspect two shallow holes, at 2 metres and 5 metres from the ground. Both of the holes were circular, shallow, roughly gnawed and an estimated diameter of 50 mm at the entrance.



Fig. 1.

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**Remarks:** The subject is identified as a Red-cheeked Flying Squirrel based on (i) the reddish colour of the cheek immediately below the left ear, (ii) the white edge of the gliding membrane or patagium, (iii) the reddish base to the tail and (iv) a flat tail with a narrow base (Francis, 2008).

Lim et al (1999) listed two species of flying squirrel as extant on Pulau Tioman (= Tioman Island), namely Horsfield's Flying Squirrel (as *Iomys horsfieldii* cf. *davisoni*) and Red Giant Flying Squirrel (*Petaurista petaurista melanotus*). There appear to be no formal records of additional species of flying squirrel on Pulau Tioman since that publication, thus this record is considered a first for the island.

The precise behaviour of this squirrel is difficult to interpret: it is not possible to ascertain whether the shallow holes being inspected were created by a squirrel or by other fauna (such a woodpecker or barbet). Typical active nesting sites for this species are up to 3.3 metres above the ground, and are about 32 mm wide (Francis, 2008).

The Red-cheeked Flying Squirrel is a small species, with a head-body length up to 184 mm: in contrast Horsfield's Flying Squirrel has a head-body length which can reach 230 mm and the Red Giant Flying Squirrel reaches 520 mm (Francis, 2008).

This species is widespread in Southeast Asia: Francis (2008) summarizes its distribution as "SE Asia: Myanmar, Thailand, S. Laos, S. Vietnam, Cambodia, Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore. Also Sumatra, Java and Borneo". Pulau Tioman thus lies within the heart of its range.

#### **References:**

- Francis, C. M. (2008). *A Field Guide to the Mammals of South-East Asia*. New Holland Publishers (UK) Ltd. 392 pp.
- Lim, B. L., Lim, K. K. P. & Yong, H. S. (1999). The terrestrial mammals of Pulau Tioman, Peninsular Malaysia, with a catalogue of specimens at the Raffles Museum, National University of Singapore. *The Raffles Bulletin of Zoology*, 47(6): 101-123.