

Dusky Langur and Black Giant Squirrel feeding on *Acacia auriculiformis* at Pulau Pinang, Peninsular Malaysia

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Subjects identified by: Nick Baker, Graeme Guy.

Location: Bukit Mutiara, Pulau Pinang, Penang, Peninsular Malaysia. (Lat 5° 27.62'N Long 100° 17.71' E)

Elevation: 180 metres.

Habitat: Secondary forest.

Date and time: 08 December 2016, 07:30 hrs to 09:30 hrs.

Identity of subjects:

(i) Dusky Langur, *Trachypithecus obscurus* (Mammalia: Primates: Cercopithecidae)

(ii) Black Giant Squirrel, *Ratufa bicolor* (Mammalia: Rodentia: Sciuridae)

(iii) Northern Black Wattle (Ear-pod Wattle), *Acacia auriculiformis* (Fabales: Fabaceae [Leguminosae])

Description of records: A family group of Dusky Langur, comprising 5 adults and one infant, were seen moving through the forest canopy towards a fruiting *Acacia auriculiformis* at 07:30 hrs. They immediately started feeding on dried legumes: the adults would extract part of the legume with their teeth (Fig. 1), but the infant was seen extracting the selected part with its fingers (Fig. 2). At 08:20 hrs a lone Black Giant Squirrel commenced feeding on the seed pods, sometimes hanging upside-down to gain better access to its chosen pods (Fig. 3). A Plantain Squirrel *Callosciurus notatus* also briefly visited the same tree. It is not clear whether these mammals were feeding on hard-coated seeds, or on the brightly-coloured, fleshy aril which attaches each seed to the seed pod.



Fig. 1.

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Fig. 2.

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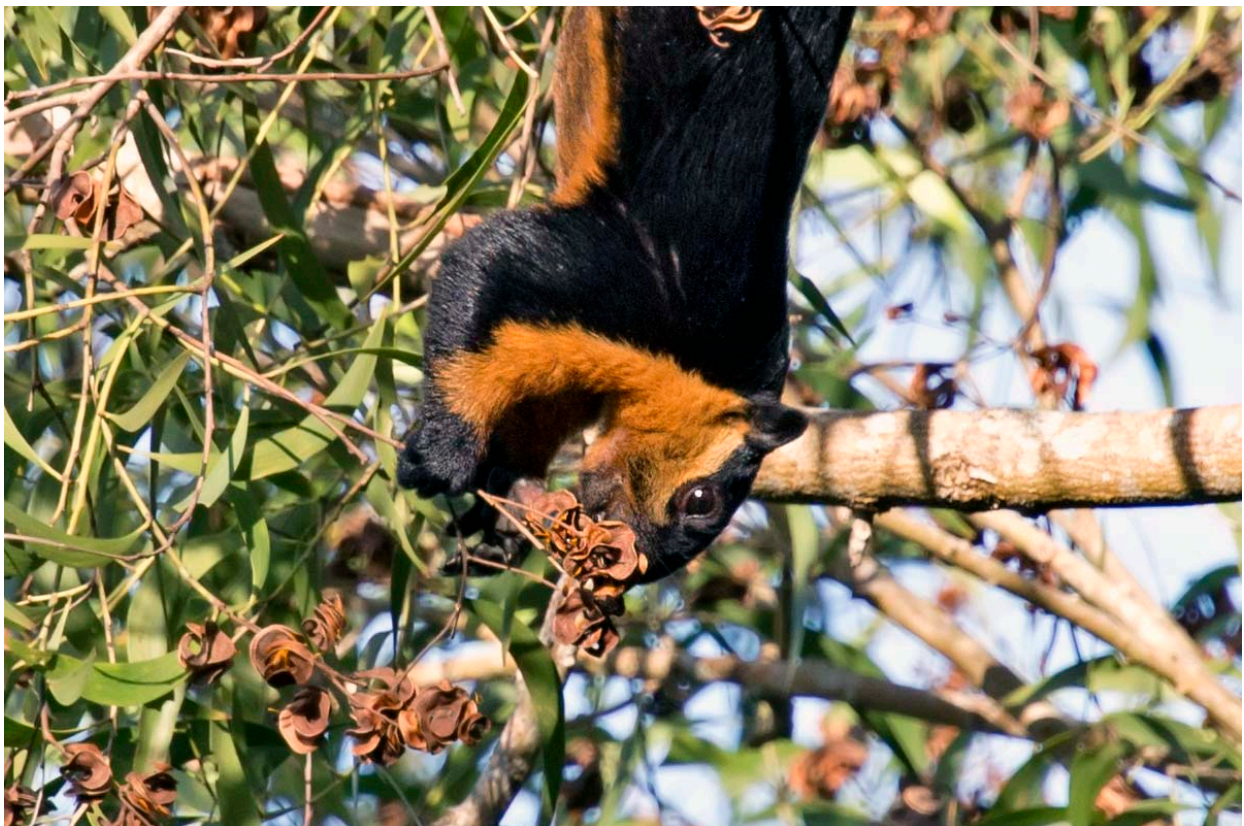


Fig. 3.

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Remarks: Both the Dusky Langur and the Black Giant Squirrel are widespread mammals in Peninsular Malaysia, and are two of the most commonly seen large, diurnal mammals in the hill forests of Pulau Pinang (= Penang Island). The former feed mainly on leaves and shoots, but also eats some fruits (especially unripe fruits), and the latter feed mainly on fruits and nuts, supplemented by insects and animal matter (Francis, 2008).

The Dusky Langur on Pulau Pinang is considered to be an endemic subspecies, namely *Trachypithecus obscurus halonifer* or Cantor's Dusky Langur (Roos et al., 2014).

Acacia auriculiformis is native to parts of eastern Indonesia, New Guinea and northern Australia. In Peninsular Malaysia (and Singapore) it is an introduced, widespread, fast-growing and sun-loving species which typically reaches up to 20 metres in height, often establishing itself in areas of nutrient-poor soil, for example on reclaimed land, in areas where native trees have been removed, or on slopes where soil erosion has occurred. In its native Australia the seeds are known to be dispersed by birds, ants and rats apparently attracted to the fleshy and brightly-coloured aril (Boland et al, 1990).

References:

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