

Malaya - Squirrels

1975

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November 11, 1975
Pasoh Forest,
Malaysia.

This is a nice forest here. Supposedly "untouched". But looks peculiar. Lots of saplings. Possibly because soil is sandy and there are many swampy patches. Altitude ca 300-450 ft.

Lots of mammals are known to occur here. Langurs, macaques, gibbons, squirrels, pigs (*S. scrofa*), 2 chevrotains, muntjac, lots of viverrids, many birds (including Argus and peacock pheasants), monitors, cobra, etc.

I went for a walk this morning. Beginning around 7:00 a.m., after rain. Continuing until 12:00 p.m. Hot and humid. Saw birds, langurs, gibbons, but no other mammals.

COMMENT: There are only a few small parakeets here. S.E. Asia is generally deficient in Psittaciformes. Could this help to explain why squirrels are so varied in the region ???

NOTE: According to Dawson, most of the local squirrels are usually seen singly. Exception is one species of Callosciurus (nigrovittatus ?), often found in groups of 2 or 3 individuals.

Go for walk along second growth edge older forest this afternoon 3:30 - 5:10 p.m. No mammals.

November 12, 1975
Pasoh Forest.

Go out again 7:30 a.m. Rather misty. Walk along N-S path. Then up tower. Reach canopy level ca. 8:15 a.m. Lots of birds. At least one mixed flock
Sun gradually coming through 9:00 a.m. Birds much quieter

People working at base of tower 7:30 a.m. Flies. Everything else very quiet. Going to leave

9:50 a.m. Catch brief glimpse of what may have been a single Ratusa leaping through tree, high in canopy.

10:00 a.m. Region of very mixed vegetation. Come across large and noisy mixed flock of birds. Includes babblers, at least one reddish cuckoo, many others. 10-50ft (at least) up. Then see single small dull squirrel or tree shrew summing diagonally up, one in midst of group. Apparently silent. 20ft up. Disappears

Also Drongo with group. Uttering harsh loud calls. Everything dead calm 10:40 a.m.

11:15 a.m. Walking back. New area. Near "crossroads" Mixed forest around tree fall. Come across mixed flock of birds. Quite large. Includes at least one Phipadura-type flycatcher, one barbet or broad bill, many others, ranging 10-20ft up. Group quite silent. One or two occasional soft cv. And there is a squirrel with this group too. At least one Calloscurus notatus (identification definite). Scream blung up large broken trunk (lots of vines and epiphytes). Silent. Disappears almost immediately. So do birds.

Stop observations 12:10 p.m.

Wonderfully hot this afternoon. Not a sound from forest except hundreds of cicadas.

Starting out again 4:10 p.m.

4:45 p.m. A little dull something runs across path. Squirrel or tree shrew or (?) small mongoose. Silent and alone. Disappears immediately.

Clouds rolling up. Thunder in distance.

5:00 p.m. Small treefall on N-S path. At least several hundred yards from where flocks seen this morning. Come across another group (just as a few scattered rain drops start

to fall). Lots of birds 10-30 ft up. Rhipidura-types, a large spectacular Woodpecker, with much red and a golden cap. Also a squirrel. Definite. Medium or small-medium. Quite thick tail. Apparently just brownish gray above (including tail), ruddier below. Syndesmonus hypodurus? Climbing vertically up very big trunk 10 -> 30 ft. Silent. Soon disappears. As do the birds.

Stop observations 5:15 pm

November 13, 1942
Parish Forest

Misty again this morning. Start out 7:20 am. Forest dripping with moisture.

7:30. Come across large mixed flock of birds. Low to middle levels. Apparently no squirrels.

8:03. Hear more birds around a tree fall. Falls are obviously attractive to flocks (at least some flocks). About 10 yds further on, region of medium forest with many saplings, see single small-medium squirrel. Running and jumping 15-25 ft up. Unidentified. Silent. Apparently alone at first. But then drifts off in general direction of flocks.

Sun starting to burn through 9:10 am

Mist back 10:00 am. Everything very quiet. Quieter than yesterday at the same time. Getting very dark 10:20

Rain starts 10:30. Turns into downpour. Start back to station. Arrive 11:00 am. Rain stops ca 11:20 am.

NOTE: There were outbursts of bird song at the beginning and at the end of the rain.

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NOTES: Quotations from J. Harrison, 1966

p. 73 (viz tupaias): "Their very striking resemblance to squirrels is obviously not an accident, and it has been suggested that mimicry is involved. It is suggested that Tupaia minor forms a pair with Sudasciurus" (correction: Sundasciurus) "terris, and T. glis with Callosciurus notatus, while in Borneo T. montana obviously pairs with Dromomys everetti, and T. tana with perhaps Lariscis insignis. In fact such resemblances are rarely exact, certainly T. montana and D. everetti are sufficiently alike to be confused, but while T. glis and C. notatus both have a brown back and reddish belly, the slope of the head, and the fact that the side stripe is on the shoulder of the treshrew and on the flank of the squirrel make them seem different to us. To a predator chasing them this difference would be less important than the resemblance, and a very good case can be made out.

There are snags, however. Are treshrews protected by their resemblance to squirrels or squirrels protected by their resemblance to treshrews? Treshrews have a rather bitter secretion on their fur, and their flesh is said to have a bitter taste. I have not eaten much treshrew flesh, but while I agree that it is not such a pleasant meat as squirrel, I would not call it offensive. It may be unpleasant enough to deter a predator, but in that case why do squirrels retain the same appearance when they extend far beyond the limits to which the treshrews are confined?

An objection of a different kind is provided by the Australian marsupials. Some of the marsupials bear an astonishing resemblance to squirrels and treshrews, but live in a different continent. Thus Antechinus flavipes, the so-called "Marsupial mouse" of the Queensland rain forest, bears a very close resemblance to the Bornean treshrew Dendrogale melanura, in appearance and in habits. There

can be no question of mimicry here, since their ranges do not overlap. Here, surely, a niche has produced a similar appearance.

This is not a subject on which I wish to even suggest an answer. A great deal more field observation is needed. How exactly does a potential enemy see a treehopper? Do treehoppers have an unpleasant taste? (my own experiments here are inconclusive). Would treehoppers benefit from resembling squirrels? We must go out in the field and look and think about this subject."

Squirrels - Africa

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M Bown, (Senegal)
August 18,
1976

We have seen 2 species of squirrels in the ORSTOM park here.
Xerus erythropus and Heliosciurus gambianus. Single individuals,
always silent and alone. Remarkably similar to one another in general
color or tone.

Get correct references to Rahm and Causdale!

Dakar, (Senegal)
Feb. 12, 1967

Beach in town

A large group of BHG's (redibundus) walking and apparently feeding, shoreward fashion, along shore, a few feet above water line 7:30 a.m. Lots of both juvs. and adults. Most adults non-breeding plumage. But a few with nearly or absolutely complete hoods

One juv. with group looks a little peculiar. Generally browner. Brown on wings more extensive. Even underparts "sandy". Possibly just some sort of "general stain". But this juv. also seems to be slightly larger than all or most of the other birds around. With relatively long thin bill also relatively long wings. (And legs?) Certainly walks in more erect posture than all or most of the other birds

Could this be genesi ????

The peculiar juv. is more or less on outskirts of group. More or less leading the advance along the shore line. But certainly not conspicuously isolated.

All birds quite silent.

Peculiar juv. certainly dominant over some (at least) of the "ordinary" juv. BHG's. When it runs forward, the others retreat. No display. Possibly also dominant over "ordinary" adults

Whole group flies up when fisherman walks along beach 7:40 a.m. Peculiar juv. apparently leaves.

Part of BHG eventually returns to beach. The rest

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feed over nearby water (near what seems to be sewer outlet).
A single "Atlantic Black-back" ("ABB") flies by.
Apparently no reaction between species.

Then more fishermen come along. Most of the birds
on shore fly up. Only 3-4 remain behind on beach. And I
see that one of these is the peculiar juv.

8:10 a.m. Now large groups of BHG's are landing
on water 100-300 m. off shore. "Resting" in large "rafts". Just
like fuscatus in Pisco Bay!

Then remaining birds on shore fly off. Peculiar juv.
flies far away along beach. Lands on shore again. Immediately
joined by group of "ordinary" BHG's!!!! All begin walk-
ing along shore, apparently feeding. Group of BHG's includes
both adult (with and without food) and juv. birds. Again
peculiar juv. is leading advance. And again appears to be
dominant.

If this peculiar juv. is really juv., it supports the
general rule that tropical gulls are more terrestrial, more
shorebird-like in habits, than north temperate gulls.

Possibly this individual also is particularly
"attractive" to ordinary BHG's.