

Sexual dimorphism in pill cockroach *Perisphaerus* sp.

Subject: Pill cockroach, *Perisphaerus* sp. (Insecta: Blattaria: Blaberidae).

Subject identified by: Contributor.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, Jungle Fall Valley; 19 February 2005; evening.

Habitat: Primary lowland forest.

Observer: Contributor.

Observation: A pair of pill cockroaches, each about 2 cm in total length, was observed engaged in copulation on a palm leaf about 90 cm off the ground. They were observed for about 5 minutes during which they did not move.

Remarks: This observation illustrates the distinct sexual dimorphism in pill cockroaches. The female is apterous (without tegmina and wings) with a hard and shiny armour-like exoskeleton, and able to roll into a ball when alarmed (Bell et al., 2007). The male is the one with tegmina and wings, smaller and depressed in appearance, and with a somewhat triangular pronotum. Female pill cockroaches are quite common, but the males are rarely seen and may not be recognized as conspecific.

Reference: Bell, W. J., L. M. Roth & C. A. Nalepa, 2007. *Cockroaches. Ecology, Behavior, and Natural History*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, USA. xiii + 230 pp.



Photograph by Kelvin K. P. Lim

Contributor: Kelvin K. P. Lim

Contact address: dbslimkp@nus.edu.sg