

Slender squirrel preying on caterpillar

Subjects: Slender squirrel, *Sundasciurus tenuis* (Mammalia: Rodentia: Sciuridae);
Caterpillar, ? *Neptis* sp. (Insecta: Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae).

Subjects identified by: Contributor.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Ulu Sembawang Park Connector north of Mandai Road, near the end of Jalan Lada Hitam; 20 March 2016; around 1730 hrs.

Habitat: Secondary forest.

Observer: Contributor.

Observation: An example of about 12 cm head and body length was observed clinging on the trunk of a tree with head pointing down. It was clutching a caterpillar in its front paws and nibbling at the caterpillar's head. The accompanying picture shows the snout of the squirrel smeared with the green body fluid of the caterpillar.

Remarks: The slender squirrel is known to be omnivorous (Baker & Lim, 2012: 137). Its diet includes fruit, seeds and other plant matter, with small amounts of arthropod prey (Medway, 1983: 61). The present observation shows that caterpillars are in the range of arthropods consumed by this rodent.

The identity of the prey caterpillar is tentative. Its fuzzy greenish colour and pair of straight horn-like protruberances at the rear end (see accompanying picture), suggest the larvae of a species of *Neptis* butterfly (see Tan & Khew, 2012: 106-109).

References:

- Baker, N. & K. K. P. Lim, 2012. *Wild Animals of Singapore. A Photographic Guide to Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians and Freshwater Fishes*. Updated edition. Draco Publishing and Distribution Pte. Ltd. and Nature Society (Singapore). 120 pp.
- Medway, Lord, 1983. *The Wild Mammals of Malaya (Peninsular Malaysia) and Singapore*. Second edition reprinted with corrections. Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur. xxiii + 131 pp.
- Tan, H. & S. K. Khew, 2012. *Caterpillars of Singapore's Butterflies*. National Parks Board, Singapore. 208 pp.



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Photograph by Nick Baker