

A sugar glider at the Botanic Gardens

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Subject: Sugar glider, *Petaurus breviceps* (Mammalia: Diprotodontia: Petauridae).

Subject identified by: K. C. Tsang.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Singapore Botanic Gardens, end of Nassim Gate Treeway; 25 July 2018, 0917 hrs.

Habitat: Urban parkland.

Observer: Ping Lau.

Observation: One example was observed moving back and forth along the top of a wooden fence beside a banyan tree (see accompanying picture). Its whereabouts thereafter is not known.

Remarks: The sugar glider is a popular house pet in North America, Europe and Japan (MacPherson, 1997), but in Singapore it is one of many 'exotic' animals that is regarded as illegal to own as a pet (Chang, 2002; Teh, 2009). The individual featured here is most likely an escapee or an abandoned pet.

The sugar glider is a marsupial that is native to New Guinea and Australia. In the wild, it feeds on invertebrate animals, as well as tree sap, nectar, and pollen (Strahan, 1995: 229). Although they are anatomically very different animals, the sugar glider does bear a strong resemblance to flying squirrels, which are rodents. It is easily recognised by its grey (instead of brown) dorsal pelage and a black stripe on the middle part of its head between the eyes, which is not present on our native flying squirrels (see Baker & Lim, 2012: 138).

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). 180 pp.
- Chang A.-L., 2002. Banned as pets. *The Straits Times*. Friday 19 April 2002: H1.
- MacPherson, C., 1997. *Sugar Gliders. A Complete Pet Owner's Manual*. Barron's Educational Series, Inc., Hauppauge, New York. 80 pp.
- Strahan, R. (ed.), 1995. *Mammals of Australia*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D. C., USA. 756 pp.
- Teh J. L., 2009. Some species 'rarer than tigers'. AVA nets 48 exotic animals in island-wide raid. *The New Paper*. Tuesday 31 March 2009: 2-3.



Photograph by Ping Lau