A tarantula of the genus *Selenocosmia* at Upper Seletar

Yi-Kai Tea, Sean Yap & Joseph Koh
teyk1@gmail.com (Tea)


Subject identified by: Sean Yap & Joseph Koh.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Central Catchment Nature Reserve, Upper Seletar; 9 July 2012; 1011 hrs.

Habitat: Mature secondary rainforest, in an open clearing among leaf litter.

Observer: Yi-Kai Tea.

Observation: A large female of about 5 cm body length was observed on the forest floor (illustrated in the accompanying picture). No burrow was found in the vicinity.

Remarks: Three species of tarantulas are known to be extant in Singapore. The smallest among them, *Phlogiellus inermis* (see Nunn et al., 2016), is common and can be found in parks and semi-disturbed environments. The other two species, the Singapore blue tarantula (*Lampropelma violaceopes*) and the Singapore black tarantula (*Selenocosmia* sp.), are entirely forest dependent and appear to be locally restricted to the Central Catchment Nature Reserve. The former, characterised by its bright blue legs and chevron-like markings on its abdomen, is an arboreal species; the latter, velvety-black in colour, is fossorial (Bennie et al., 2011; Court & Wang, 2011).

The taxonomic status of the genus *Selenocosmia* in Singapore is contentious, with specimens frequently identified as *Selenocosmia javanensis* (see Tan et al., 2014). However, comparison of genital morphology disagrees with this identification, suggesting that specimens from Singapore represent a hitherto undescribed species (Tan et al., 2014). It is not known if similar specimens observed in Johor, Malaysia, are conspecific with the Singapore ones. Abraham (1942) described a congener, *Selenocosmia tahanensis*, from Taman Negara in Peninsular Malaysia.

Little is known of the life history and biology of the Singapore black tarantula. Tan et al. (2014) reported a 55 mm female from the Nee Soon swamp forest. The example was observed at 2230 hrs near a burrow on the forest floor. The specimen featured here was observed in mature secondary forest but no burrow was found in the vicinity.

References:
Frontal-dorsal view of the female *Selenocosmia* at Upper Seletar. Photograph by Yi-Kai Tea.