

## Biodiversity Record: Clearwing tussock moths, *Perina sunda*, at Keong Saik Road

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**Subjects:** Sunda clearwing tussock moth, *Perina sunda* (Insecta: Lepidoptera: Erebiidae: Lymantriinae).

**Subjects identified by:** Lau Wing Lup and Chan Sow-Yan.

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Island, Keong Saik Road, near Chinatown Complex; 18 May 2022 at around 1100 hrs and 4 June 2022 at around 1458 hrs.

**Habitat:** Urban parkland.

**Observer:** Lau Wing Lup.

**Observation:** On a row of Chinese banyan (*Ficus microcarpa*) shrubs grown in a concrete trough, about seven female moths, three male moths, 30 caterpillars and 15 pupae were noted. Female moths (Figs. 1, 3 & 4) are yellowish white with a coat of fine hairs and perched on leaves, moving slowly only when disturbed. Male moths (Figs. 1 & 2) are smaller, have transparent wings and tend to be skittish when touched. Adult moths have feathery antennae (Fig. 2). The caterpillars (Figs. 5 & 6) and pupae (Figs. 7 & 8) are hairy and come in various bright colours. A cluster of six pinkish white eggs was noted on the surface of a green leaf (Fig. 9). A separate cluster of 18 eggs was dark-grey and appeared to be dried (Fig. 10).

The observer revisited the site a few weeks later (4 June) and found that the Chinese banyan shrubs had suffered extensive defoliation (Fig. 11), most likely due to being consumed by caterpillars. No caterpillars were found and only one female moth remained perched on one of the few remaining leaves. Despite the damage, new shoots had sprouted on the plants.



Fig. 1. Dorsal view of a pair of *Perina sunda*. The female (ca. 20 mm) is on the left; the male, smaller with transparent wings, is on the right. (Photograph by: Lau Wing Lup)



Fig. 2. Lateral view of a male moth (ca. 15 mm) with feathery antenna extended. Fig. 3. Fronto-lateral view of a female moth. Fig. 4. Ventral view of another female moth perched on a twig. Fig. 5. Dorsal view of a caterpillar (ca. 20 mm) with red markings. Fig. 6. Dorsal view of a caterpillar (ca. 20 mm) with orange markings. Fig. 7. Dorsal view of a pupa (ca. 20 mm) with orange markings. Fig. 8. Dorsal view of another pupa (ca. 20 mm) with brown and black markings. Fig. 9. A cluster of six apparently freshly laid eggs (each ca. 1.5 mm in diameter) on the surface of a leaf. Fig. 10. A cluster of 18 apparently dried eggs (each ca. 1 mm diameter). Fig. 11. Row of severely defoliated Chinese banyan on 4 June 2022. (Photographs by: Lau Wing Lup).

**Remarks:** *Perina sunda* is native throughout Sundaland and the Philippines (Holloway, 1999). In Singapore, it is scarcely noticed, but in December 2017 at Fort Siloso on Sentosa Island, thousands of larvae and pupae identified as *Perina sunda* were found under a defoliated *Ficus superba* tree. It attracted five species of migratory cuckoos that were apparently feeding on the caterpillars, and that drew droves of bird photographers to the area. Signs were placed in the area warning people to stay clear of the caterpillars which are known to harbor toxins and cause irritation to humans when touched (Tan, 2017).

**Literature cited:**

Holloway JD (1999) The moths of Borneo 5: Family Lyamatriidae. Malayan Nature Journal, 53: 1–188.  
Tan A (2017) Bird watchers flock to Sentosa for glimpse of rare bird. The Straits Times (online edition), 31 December 2017. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/bird-watchers-flock-to-sentosa-for-glimpse-of-rare-bird> (Accessed 15 August 2022)