

Biodiversity Record: Small-toothed palm civets in the Central Catchment forest

Emmanuel S. C. Goh* & Bryan J. L. Seah

gohshyuechian@gmail.com (*corresponding author)

Recommended citation. Goh ESC & Seah BJL (2023) Biodiversity Record: Small-toothed palm civets in the Central Catchment forest. Nature in Singapore, 16: e2023055. DOI: 10.26107/NIS-2023-0055

Subjects: Small-toothed palm civet, *Arctogalidia trivirgata* (Mammalia: Carnivora: Viverridae).

Subjects identified by: Emmanuel S. C. Goh.

Locations, dates and times: Singapore Island, Central Catchment Nature Reserve, at two general locations along the north-western edge; on three evenings — 1) 11 December 2022 at around 2030 hrs; 2) 9 February 2023 at around 2300 hrs; 3) 26 May 2023 at around 2130 hrs.

Habitat: Secondary forest.

Observers: Viewed on three occasions by the following – 1) Emmanuel S. C. Goh, Debbie Wong and Chan Hui Ling; 2) Emmanuel S. C. Goh, Bryan J. L. Seah, Zoe Lim, Myles Masterson, Riley Corbin and Bob Zakaria; 3) Bryan J. L. Seah, Zoe Lim, Jolene Lim and Emmanuel S. C. Goh.

Observations:

1) In the evening of 11 December 2022, an example of about 20 cm head and body length (estimated using the figs around it) was observed sitting on a horizontal branch of a *Ficus* tree about 20 m above the ground (Fig. 1). This apparent juvenile climbed further into the vegetation shortly after without consuming any figs, and was not seen again.



Fig. 1. An apparent juvenile small-toothed palm civet perching on a fig tree. (Photograph by: Emmanuel Goh).



Fig. 2. Two individuals at rest on branches of a tree. (Photograph by: Emmanuel Goh).



Fig. 3. A pair huddling together while resting (Photograph by: Emmanuel Goh).

2) In the evening of 9 February 2023, two individuals were located with their eye-shine darting about the canopy. At one point, the two animals were observed huddling together. They subsequently separated and perched on different branches about 15 m from the ground (Fig. 2). They were observed remaining at the same spot for about 30 minutes, and were still there when the observers left. The observers were unable to ascertain if the pair consists of an adult and juvenile, or two juvenile individuals. This was around 25 m away from the previous sighting.

3) In the evening of 26 May 2023, two examples were seen huddling together on an unidentified tree about 15 m from the ground (Fig. 3). The animal on the left proceeded to sleep by leaning its head against an adjacent branch while snuggling against the other. The one on the right subsequently slept while resting its chin against the branch. When the observers returned to the same spot about an hour later, the pair were no longer in the area. They were at least 1 km away from the location of the second sighting.

Remarks: In Singapore, the small-toothed palm civet is rarely seen and regarded as ‘critically endangered’ (Lim et al. 2008). It appears to be confined to Bukit Timah and Central Catchment Nature Reserves (Baker & Lim, 2012; Chua et al., 2012). From its estimated size, the lone animal in the first featured sighting appears to be a juvenile. In Singapore, there seems to be one other record of a young animal (Serin & Subaraj, 2016). It is possible that second and third observations involved the same animals. They were found in the same area just over 3 months apart. They could be a mother and child pair, as the species is believed to be solitary (see Baker & Lim, 2012).

Literature cited:

- Baker N & Lim KKP (2012) Wild Animals of Singapore. A Photographic Guide to Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians and Freshwater Fishes. Updated edition. Draco Publishing & Distribution Pte. Ltd. and Nature Society (Singapore), Singapore, 180 pp.
- Chua MAH, Lim KKP & Low CHS (2012) The diversity and status of the civets (Viverridae) of Singapore. *Small Carnivore Conservation*, 47: 1–10.
- Lim KKP, Subaraj R, Yeo SH, Lim N, Lane D & Lee BYH (2008) Mammals. In: Davison GWH, Ng PKL & Ho HC (eds.) *The Singapore Red Data Book. Threatened Plants & Animals of Singapore. Second Edition.* The Nature Society (Singapore), pp. 190–207.
- Serin S & Subaraj R (2016) Three-striped palm civets feeding on cauliflory figs. *Singapore Biodiversity Records*, 2016: 162.