

Biodiversity Record: Sunda colugo mobbed by crow along road with heavy vehicular traffic

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Recommended citation. Tan HH (2023) Biodiversity Record: Sunda colugo mobbed by crow along road with heavy vehicular traffic. Nature in Singapore, 16: e2023113. DOI: 10.26107/NIS-2023-0113

Subjects: Sunda colugo, *Galeopterus variegatus* (Mammalia: Dermoptera: Cynocephalidae);
House crow, *Corvus splendens* (Aves: Passeriformes: Corvidae).

Subjects identified by: Heok Hui Tan.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Upper Bukit Timah Road, just after Hume Avenue slip road, towards Woodlands Road; 19 October 2023, 0831 hrs.

Habitat: On a tree at the side of a wide metaled road, in the vicinity of residential buildings, parkland and secondary forest.

Observer: Heok Hui Tan.

Observation: While caught in a traffic congestion in his car along Upper Bukit Timah Road in the direction of Clementi Road, the observer's attention was drawn to a greyish-brown object falling to the base of a wayside tree. A house crow was noted briefly mobbing this entity, which turned out to be an adult colugo. The animal then climbed up the tree trunk, to a height of less than 1.5 m above the ground where it clung (Fig. 1). The crow was not seen thereafter. Within seconds, the traffic eased and the observer drove away from the scene. The entire observation was brief, lasting about one minute.

Remarks: In Singapore, the Sunda colugo is not strictly a forest denizen as it is known to inhabit suburban parkland adjacent to secondary forests (Lim, 2007; Lim, 2014; Low & Lai, 2018; Bromley et al., 2019; Yeong & Seow, 2021; Tan, 2022; Goh & Tang, 2023). Although devoid of forest cover and largely exposed, the location of the featured sighting is near two patches of natural forest. The Bukit Batok Nature Park is along the same side of the road and on the opposite side of the road is the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. Colugos have been known to glide across roads (Baker, 2023) with mature tree plantings, but some individuals fail to make it to the other side (Lim, 2014; Goh & Tang, 2023).

The mobbing of the colugo by a house crow is an interesting and unexpected interaction between the two species. Colugos are herbivorous and unlikely to pose as a predatory threat to the bird. They also have cryptic colouration that provides effective camouflage on tree trunks. Although this could not be verified, it is speculated that the crow had a nest in the immediate vicinity and will attack any large animal that it could see approaching too close to its nest.

Literature cited:

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Fig. 1. Sunda colugo (indicated by arrow) clinging onto a wayside tree along Upper Bukit Timah Road on 19 October 2023. The mobbing crow is not within the frame of the picture (Photograph by: Heok Hui Tan).