

## An encounter with a pair of mating red-tailed racers

Richard White

[richard@eyos-expeditions.com](mailto:richard@eyos-expeditions.com)

---

**Subjects:** Red-tailed racer, *Gonyosoma oxycephalum* (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubridae).  
Plantain squirrel, *Callosciurus notatus* (Mammalia: Rodentia: Sciuridae).

**Subjects identified by:** Richard White.

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Island, Bukit Drive, just outside the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve; 21 May 2020; around 1730 hrs.

**Habitat:** Urban parkland at the edge of primary rainforest. On a roadside tree.

**Observer:** Richard White.



Copulating red-tailed racers. The con-joined cloaca and tails of the two snakes are at the middle of the picture, with the presumed male on the right. The bodies of the snakes are draped on the branches on either sides with the heads outside the frame. The plantain squirrel is perched at the middle of the top edge of the picture. Photograph by Richard White

**Observation:** While walking along the street, the observer heard squirrels vocalizing loudly in the canopy of a roadside tree. Upon looking up, two inter-twined snake tails were noted hanging down from branches about 8 m up (see accompanying picture). Both snakes were draped over branches and facing in opposite directions. As the cloaca regions of the two snakes were united, it appeared that they were copulating. Both snakes were over one metre in length, but the one on the right in the picture seemed to be smaller. At least four plantain squirrels were making noise around them and in relatively close proximity to the snakes. They appeared to be agitated by the presence of the snakes, and possibly trying to mob them. One of the squirrels can be seen at the upper part of the picture. The observer left the scene after a few minutes.

**Remarks:** This a rare observation of red-tailed racers mating in the wild. As this species is regarded as a snake of mature forests (see Baker & Lim, 2012: 103), it is also noteworthy for recording this species in an urban environment, although it is near the edge of the forest. Individuals have been found at peripheral forested areas at western Mandai (Groenewoud & Law, 2015), Venus Loop and Lower Peirce (Ng et al., 2016), as well as Thomson Nature Park (Ng, 2019).

In Singapore, the red-tailed racer has been recorded being mobbed by squirrels and monkeys (Ng et al., 2016). This is not surprising for squirrels and similar sized small mammals are preyed on by this species (see Tan, 2018).

**References:**

- Baker N & Lim KKP (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.
- Groenewoud D & Law IS (2015) Red-tailed racer at Mandai. Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2015: 50.
- Ng MFC, Sankar A & Law IS (2016) Mobbing of red-tailed racer by squirrels and macaques. Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2016: 42-45.
- Ng S (2019) Red-tailed racer at Thomson Nature Park. Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2019: 153.
- Tan MMQ (2018) Red-tailed racer predated on plantain squirrel. Singapore Biodiversity Records, 2018: 55-56.