

## Biodiversity Record: Apparently successful maternal retrieval of an infant cave nectar bat

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**Recommended citation.** Lim KCL (2026) Biodiversity Record: Apparently successful maternal retrieval of an infant cave nectar bat. Nature in Singapore, 19: e2026004. DOI: 10.26107/NIS-2026-0004

**Subjects:** Cave nectar bat, *Eonycteris spelaea* (Mammalia: Chiroptera: Pteropodidae).

**Subjects identified by:** Carmen Choong.

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Island, Pasir Ris Drive 4, around blocks 479, 480 and 481; 7 October 2025; around 0110 hrs. Initial rescue at 481 Pasir Ris Drive 4, on 6 October 2025; around 0100 hrs.

**Habitat:** Urban area of concrete high-rise residential buildings. At a carpark.

**Observers:** Aaron Hyberger, Karina Lim, Chow Jia Yi and Auric Sim. Initial rescue conducted by Carmen Choong and Gan Zee Kiat.

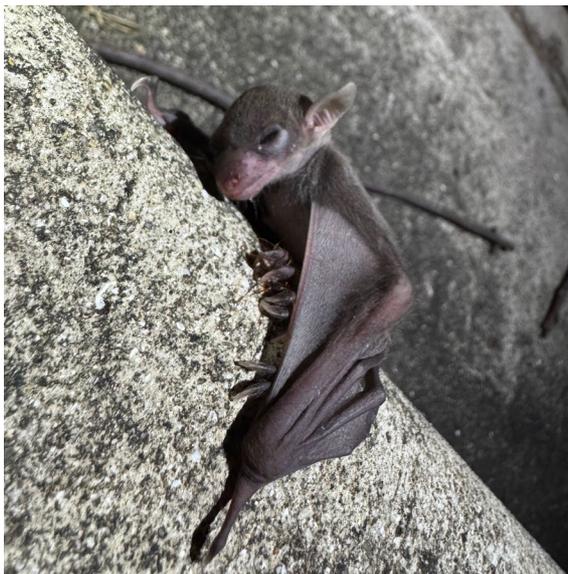


Fig. 1. Fronto-lateral view of the juvenile cave nectar bat during initial rescue on 6 October 2025. Fig. 2. Fronto-ventral view of the same bat after rescue (Photographs by: Carmen Choong).

**Observations:** A juvenile cave nectar bat (Figs. 1 & 2) was rescued by Carmen Choong and Gan Zee Kiat from an apartment building (Block 481) on 6 October 2025 at around 0100 hrs following a call to the ACRES Wildlife Rescue Hotline at 0034 hrs. The pup was found on the ground, bright, alert, and actively vocalising. After a physical examination, it was deemed healthy for release. The juvenile cave nectar bat had a forearm length of approximately 3.5 cm, and body length of approximately 4.5 cm. As it was too young to fend for itself, it was necessary for the pup to be reunited with its mother.

The following night, an attempt was made to locate the parent bat in the general area where the pup was found. After approximately one hour of searching, adult bats were observed flying in the vicinity in response to playbacks of recordings of the juvenile's vocalisations. The pup was then placed hanging among foliage about 2 m off the ground on a *Xanthostemon chrysanthus* tree at the carpark. Two adult bats were subsequently observed to circle the juvenile (Fig. 3). The circling behaviour lasted approximately 4 minutes, after which one adult bat swooped down and wrapped its wings around the juvenile. The second bat was not seen during the retrieval. Following a brief period of movement lasting approximately 30 seconds, the first bat took flight with the pup. The two adult bats were observed leaving the

scene at around 0110 hrs, and were subsequently no longer observed in the area. The entire retrieval process lasted approximately 4 minutes and 30 seconds.

**Remarks:** Working on the assumption that the adult bat who retrieved the juvenile was its biological mother, this observation documents a successful reunion of a mother and child *Eonycteris spelaea*. It is assumed that the mother bat had returned the following night to the same area where she had lost her child and that she could recognise the vocalisations of that particular pup. As we are unable to ascertain the identity of the bats involved, there could be a possibility that the pup was adopted by an unrelated female. The gender of the second adult bat and its relationship with the supposed mother bat is unknown.

Cave nectar bats are capable of long-distance foraging, travelling more than 38 km per night (Start & Marshall, 1974). They are known to utilise multiple foraging roosts in addition to a primary night roost (Acharya et al., 2015a). Although this species has demonstrated strong fidelity to established foraging sites and an ability to exploit modified habitats even when food resources are spatially isolated (Acharya et al., 2015b), we were initially uncertain whether the adult female would return to the same location at a similar time. This is especially given the scarcity of flowering trees in this urbanised area.

This species has been suggested to exhibit a polygynous mating system (Bumrungsri et al., 2013) which usually means that males generally do not participate in parental care. It is thus noteworthy that two adult bats arrived and departed together following the retrieval of the juvenile, an observation that may warrant further investigation into social or reproductive behaviour during the breeding period.



Fig. 3. Two adult cave nectar bats (in yellow circles) circling the tree in the carpark where the juvenile bat was placed (approximate position in green circle) (Image extracted from video recorded by: Karina Lim).

#### Literature cited:

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- Bumrungsri S, Lang D, Harrower C, Sripaoraya E, Kitpipit K & Racey PA (2013) The dawn bat *Eonycteris spelaea* Dobson (Chiroptera: Pteropodidae) feeds mainly on pollen of economically important food plants in Thailand. *Acta Chiropterologica*, 15(1): 95–104.
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