

Taipei and vicinity, April-May 2018

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I live very close to Taiwan, so I can afford to explore this fascinating island part by part. My first visit was 4 days in Taipei; it was a family trip so I only spent about 12 hours looking for mammals. The far north is arguably the least interesting section of Taiwan, but it's still easy to see some interesting wildlife.

Taiwan has 76 species of land mammals; 18 of them are endemic and most others are represented by endemic subspecies. New discoveries are very likely; a few species of bats have been recently described and an isolated population of least weasel found in central mountains. The country is very friendly; English is understood by many more people than in China or Japan. Taipei traffic is a bit unnerving, but otherwise it's a pleasant city, and from the central part you can get to decent natural areas in half hour or less (but weekends and rush hours should be avoided).

Taipei Botanical Garden is a nice place to spend a couple hours; it has abundant **Pallas's squirrels** and **Norway rats** (introduced). The garden closes late so you can look for nocturnal species (I didn't). **Japanese** and **common pipistrelles** roost under the roof of the adjacent National Museum of History (25.031707N 121.511238E) and feed over the garden; at dusk you can see them well as they emerge from under roof tiles. The garden is famous for birding (world's best place to see Malayan night-heron).

Fuyang Eco Park (25.016964N 121.557122E) has **giant flying squirrels**; they are currently classified as a subspecies of **Indian** but might be an endemic species. We spent only about an hour there and didn't see the squirrels, but my wife saw a **great roundleaf bat** hanging from a tree branch. Adjacent Fuzhoushan Park has similar habitat but is much larger and with more trails.

Maokong Cable Car provides easy access to hill forests above Taipei Zoo; we only explored the area very briefly and saw **Pallas's squirrels** and one **lesser ricefield rat** (from the little train that goes from the second cable car station through the zoo territory). Yinhe Cave (24.959476N 121.582995E) within walking distance from the upper station might be worth exploring.

Tianmu Historic Trail has level parts and long flights of stairs; you can access the best and longest level section directly from a road at 25.133509N 121.536066E (parking very limited; try Zest Cafe about 100 m down the road from the trailhead). This is the best place near Taipei to see **Taiwanese macaques**; I miss them during the day (when Pallas's squirrels were the only mammals visible), but found two sleeping in trees at night. This was the best night walk of the trip: I walked the level section twice and saw four **Indian giant flying squirrels**, two very tame **masked palm civets**, one **crab-eating mongoose**, and one **great roundleaf bat** roosting from a snag, as well as a mountain scops-owl and lots of other stuff.

Yangmingshan National Park is just north of the city and has secondary forests and grasslands (mostly dominated by arrow bamboo). Note that rush hour traffic is from Taipei in the morning and towards the city in the afternoon. The park reportedly has Chinese pangolins and Chinese hares; unfortunately, feral cats are abundant and there are packs of large feral dogs. A nice trail for night walks is Erziping Trail (25.185930N 121.525250E), 1.8 km long and wheelchair-accessible. I walked it just before dawn and then at sunset and didn't see any mammals other than **Chinese ferret-badger** and **Pallas's squirrels**, but it should be more interesting before midnight. Nearby Datun Nature Park has a few boardwalks around a lake; some parts of the lakeshore look a bit tundra-like, and I saw a **Taiwanese gray shrew** there (at 25.186446N 121.523116 E). The short Xiaoyoukeng Trail (25.179804N 121.546438E; park at the locked gate across the road) had a lot of burrows, and I eventually saw a **Pere David's vole** there, as well as a **small Indian civet** at 25.179149N 121.549290E. Night driving in the park was completely unproductive, probably because there's traffic on almost all roads all night. I walked the road to Qingtiangang Grasslands (starting at 25.167603N 121.563137E) and saw a **wild boar** in the forested part, and a few **Coxing's white-bellied rats** plus one **Eurasian harvest mouse** along the last 200 m. I also saw a shrew near Menghuanghu Pond (25.167494N 121.560331E), but only through a thermal imager; it was almost certainly another **Taiwanese gray shrew** because other Taiwan species occur either lower or higher. The gorgeous long-tailed birds picking moths from visitor centers' lights at dawn are Taiwanese blue magpies.