



Spectral tarsier (*Tarsius tarsier*)

### Lembeh Island, August 9-10, 2009 and September 19-28, 2018

VLADIMIR DINETS

Lembeh Island, separated from Sulawesi by a narrow strait, is largely deforested (there are only badly degraded dry forests on steep slopes and hilltops, plus a few tiny pockets of mangroves), and has no endemics. However, Lembeh Strait is one of the world's best scuba diving sites, famous for muck diving (looking for weird fauna inhabiting seemingly barren expanses of black volcanic sand). So you might end up staying on the island, and here's some info on mammals I saw there during two brief stays. Mammals of the island have never been surveyed, and there might be a lot more of them present. **Black crested macaque** (*Macaca nigra*) and **Sulawesi babirusa** (*Babyrousa celebensis*) were described from Lembeh, and there are old records of **bear cuscus** (*Ailurops ursinus*), **Sulawesi warty pig** (*Sus celebensis*), and introduced **Javan deer** (*Cervus timorensis*). Locals told me that none of these species remain, except for one dwindling group of macaques, now numbering about ten.

In 2009 my future wife and I stayed at NAD Lembeh diving lodge (1.444781N 125.240931E) for just one day, and we were so impressed that we spent nine years dreaming of return. In 2018 we finally made it back, this time with our 3 year-old daughter who didn't dive but still enjoyed our stay at the lodge as much as we did. During our first stay the only mammals seen were a small bat that roosted in a shed, tentatively identified as **Peters's pipistrelle** (*Falsistrellus petersi*), and a **Sulawesi dwarf squirrel** (*Prosciurillus murinus*) in the forest just above the cabins. By 2018 the shed was gone, the squirrels no longer occurred in the forest according to the lodge's owners, but there were three families of **spectral tarsiers** (*Tarsius tarsier*) living on the slope above the cabins. There were also numerous **yellow-tailed rats** (*Rattus xanthurus*) high in trees (particularly in coconut palms); they were said to be the preferred hunting target of the locals now that all larger game has been killed. A steep, but short and well-maintained trail climbs from the lodge to the island's main road; you can walk only short distance in either direction before approaching a village, but along these short stretches you can find more tarsiers and yellow-tailed rats, plus smaller, brown-colored **Hellwald's spiny rats** (*Maxomys hellwaldii*) in roadside shrubbery. Mid-sized bats that fly along the road and produce evenly-spaced audible clicks are apparently **minute fruit bats** (*Cynopterus minutus*), echolocating with wing clicks.

Gua Kalong ("bat cave", 1.426454N 125.224845E) is located near the highest point of the island. After a long walk through a maze of overgrown trails, you have to squeeze into a narrow crack-like pit. About 30 m down is a small colony of **Manado fruit bats** (*Rousettus bidens*). You'll need climbing gear to see them up-close; otherwise bring binoculars. I saw a **whitish dwarf squirrel** (*P. leucomus*) while walking to the cave, a **black-footed shrew** (*Crocidura nigripes*) near the cave after dark, and a **Celebes rat** (*Taeromys celebensis*) on the way home.

**Dugongs** (*Dugong dugon*) reportedly occur near the northern tip of the island; there are a few dive sites there but dive operators seldom visit them.





Yellow-tailed rat (*Rattus xanthurus*)



Hellwald's spiny rat (*Maxomys hellwaldii*)



Celebes rat (*Taeromys celebensis*)



More spectral tarsiers