

Taiwan, November 12-16, 2018

VLADIMIR DINETS

Since Taiwan is already covered by a few trip reports, here are a few additional details on well-known sites plus a few words about a few others. In 96 hours on the island I got 40+ species, and apparently discovered 1.

Golden Bat Home in Yunlin (23.620851N, 120.261281E) is a bat research and conservation center. **Taiwan Hodgson's myotis** (*Myotis formosus flavus*) are only present April-October, so I missed them. The website says that the Museum is closed Monday and Tuesday but that doesn't seem to be the case. There were no roosting bats in trees but plenty in bat boxes: dozens of **Japanese pipistrelles** (*Pipistrellus abramus*), many **chestnut bats** (*Scotophilus kuhli*), and one **Horikawa's serotine** (*Eptesicus serotinus horikawai*). Other species (8 total) have been recorded occasionally, mostly in April-August.

Dasyueshan National Forest Recreation Area is the best mammalwatching destination in Taiwan according to all local naturalists I've talked with; it reportedly got even better recently after the access road was blocked by landslides for a few years.

As you drive up the access road, look for a sign "Hengliangshan Nature Trail 700 m ->", turn right, and park at 24.23937N 120.909625E. The river under the bridge there had **Leander's water shrew** (*Chimarrogale leander*) and a **Formosan crab-eating mongoose** (*Herpestes urva formosanus*); another mongoose was a roadkill ~300 m up the road. A very rare **yellow-necked sprite** (*Arielulus torquatus*) was night-roosting under the bridge. The surrounding area is a mix of houses, small plantations, gardens, bamboo groves, and secondary forest, where I found a **greater bandicoot rat** (*Bandicota indica*, possibly introduced).

At Km. 23 (exactly at the milepost) there is a narrow pullout where birders feed Swinhoe's pheasants; park a bit higher up and look for **Taiwan long-nosed squirrels** (*Dremomys owstoni*, split from *D. pernyi* by Oshida et al. 2017) and **Formosan macaques** (*Macaca cyclopis*) there at dawn.

Above Km. 27, **Taiwan muntjac** (*Muntiacus reevesi micrurus*), **Taiwan red-and-white giant flying squirrel** (*Petaurista alborufus lena*), **soft-furred Taiwan rat** (*Niviventer culturatus*), and **Taiwan mouse** (*Apodemus semotus*) became abundant (note: I hate the idea of using "field mouse" as common names for *Apodemus* spp; it's a large genus of forest mice with just one species occurring in fields as well as meadows, steppes, scrublands, and secondary forests). There are two tunnels on that stretch of the road, both in particularly good places to see animals. The first (longer) tunnel had two hibernating bats (so cold they were invisible with my thermal imager): **yellow-chested tube-nosed bat** (*Murina bicolor*) and **Taiwan pygmy myotis** (*Submyotodon latirostris*); I also saw a **Taiwan civet** (*Paguma larvata taiwana*) near the lower entrance. The second (very short) tunnel has a few holes in the ceiling used by bats, all of them difficult to see well and pretty much impossible to photograph in those holes. During the day there were **eastern bentwings** (*Miniopterus fuliginosus*), while at night there were **Taiwan noctules** (*Nyctalus plancyi vetulinus*) and **Eastern barbastelles** (*Barbastella darjelingensis*); look also for brown wood owls in that area. Just below the park entrance gate (24.244523N 120.975072E, closed 18:00-06:00) I saw one **Taiwan red giant flying squirrel** (*Petaurista philippensis grandis*); it's usually found at much lower elevations.

Taiwan serow (*Capricornis swinhoei*) was common between km. 43 and 48. At Km. 50 there is a feeding spot for Mikado pheasants (24.279799N 121.025558E, in the little garden behind the toilet) that was attended by tame **Taiwan muntjacs** and **Taiwan long-nosed squirrels** during the day and by very shy **Taiwan mice** and **Taiwan voles** (*Alexandromus kukuchii*) at night. Two good trails start from that area. One (Saoshan Trail, trailhead at 24.278720N 121.025650E) is good for rodents at night (and for undergrowth birds during the day): along the first few kilometers I saw **soft-furred Taiwan rats** and **Taiwan mice**, one **Pere David's vole** (*Eothenomys melanogaster*), and one **Taiwan least weasel** (*Mustela nivalis formosanus*), plus lots of **Taiwan muntjacs**. (Another good place for **least weasels** is reportedly along the lakeshore at 24.282904N 121.027137E.) The other trail (Big Tree Trail) starts at 24.282659N 121.029330E; it is good for canopy birds (i. e. flamecrest) and **Taiwan striped squirrel** (*Tamiops maritimus formosanus*) during the day, and for **Taiwan muntjac** and **Taiwan red-and-white giant flying squirrel** at night; I also saw a **Taiwanese brown-toothed**

shrew (*Episoriculus fumidus*) about 100 m before the trail's end at night. From the end of that trail starts a short loop trail (Monument Trail) which is also good for birds during the day and for small mammals at night: two very rare **Taiwan long-eared bats** (*Plecotus taivanus*) were roosting under the roof of the monument (a small gazebo), while another rarity, a **lesser Taiwanese shrew** (*Chodsigoa sodalis*, identified by dark color and long tail), occurred in a wet patch along the return portion of the loop.

Taroko Gorge National Park is generally considered the island's most scenic; it also has the largest elevation range (5 to 3422 m). The highest part is Hehuanshan National Forest Recreation Area, reportedly good for **voles** and **Taiwan least weasel**. I drove through it on a very cold night and missed all mammals and the scenery.

Driving down towards the gorge late at night, I saw one **Taiwan muntjac**, one **Formosan black bear** (*Ursus thibetanus formosanus*) crossing the road, one roadkill **soft-furred Taiwan rat**, numerous **Taiwan mice**, and a few **Formosan sambars** (*Cervus unicolor swinhoei*) on distant slopes. I also photographed an undescribed **weasel** that I am working on describing now.

In the gorge, Liuhui Trail (24.179227N 121.508022E) is good for low-elevation forest animals: at night there were **Formosan lesser horseshoe bats** (*Rhinolophus monoceros*) roosting in a small tunnel, **Oriental freetail** (*Tadarida insignis*) flying overhead, and one **Taiwan ferret badger** (*Melogale moschata subaurantiaca*), while during the day I saw **Formosan macaques** and **Formosan squirrels** (*Callosciurus erythraeus taiwanensis*).

Taipingshan National Forest Recreation Area is another good place for mammals; it's a bit crowded during the day and the gates are locked 21:00-6:00 (21:00-4:00 on weekends). I explored it with Keith Barnes, a birding guide extraordinaire who lives on the island.

Lake Cuifeng Lookout (24.513023, 121.609329) is said to be good for **Taiwan boar** (*Sus scrofa taiwanensis*) and many smaller species after sunset, but the only mammals we saw there were dark, mid-sized myotis bats flying around; according to Chou Shock (local bat expert) they were **Chinese water myotis** (*Myotis laniger*). Driving down after dark we saw a pair of **Taiwan yellow-throated martens** (*Martes flavigula robinsoni*), and a few **Taiwan muntjacs**. Spotlighting above and below the entrance gate (24.557260N 121.499533E) produced both species of **giant flying squirrels** and a rat we couldn't identify (possibly **Oriental house rat**, *Rattus rattus tanezumi*).

Jianching Huaigu Trail (24.505182N 121.525613E) is short but good; the habitat looked excellent for **shrews** and indeed we saw one but only through the thermal imager; the most likely species there would be **Taiwanese brown-toothed shrew**. Our consolation was a very tame **Formosan greater horseshoe bat** (*Rhinolophus formosae*) night-roosting on a low branch above the trail, and a brief sighting of a **Formosan weasel** (*Mustela sibirica davidiana*). A tiny bat flying along the trail was likely the yet-undescribed species locally known as **mountain pipistrelle** ("*Pipistrellus montanus*"). Another trail that looked good for shrews was a very short boardwalk at the visitor center (24.541681N 121.512827E), but we didn't have time to walk it at night. During the day there were **Formosan macaques** around.

We spent two nights harp-trapping bats at 24.609384N, 121.552852E (near Datong) with Dr. Chao-Lung Hsu. November is not a good time for this, and we caught only three bats: one **eastern bentwing** and two **Taiwanese tube-nosed bats** (*Murina puta*). I found two **dark woolly bats** (*Kerivoula furva*) in a young banana leaf, and another **Taiwanese tube-nosed bat** in a dry one. In May-August that site is said to be good for **golden-tipped tube-nosed bat** (*Harpiola isodon*). (Note: trapping bats without a permit is illegal in Taiwan.) A small tunnel nearby had a bunch of **Formosan leaf-nosed bats** (*Hipposideros armiger terasensis*) during the day and at night; there was also one **Formosan lesser horseshoe bat** there at night, too skittish to see well.

Wuweigang Waterbird Refuge (24.616599N 121.852560E) had very high density of **insular mole** (*Mogera insularis*) tunnels. Unfortunately, I found them just a few hours before my flight home, so I couldn't even try to see the moles.

A few photos



Hipposideros armiger and *Rhinolophus formosanum*



Pipistrellus abramus and *Sumbyotodon latirostris*



Murina puta



Murina bicolor and *Kerivoula furva*



Scotophilus kuhli



Miniopterus fuliginosus



Macaca cyclotis



Herpestes urva formosanus



Capricornis swinhoei



Muntiacus reevesi micrurus



Petaurista alborufus lena



Petaurista (philippensis) grandis



Dremomys owstoni and *Tamiops maritimus formosanus*



Niviventer culturatus



Apodemus semotus