

Singapore & Malaysia

January – February 2019



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INTRODUCTION

The primary destination on this holiday was actually Taiwan (see separate report), but after reading Vladimir Dinets's report from Singapore on Mammalwatching.com, we decided to pay a short visit to this tiny country on our way home. When we began looking into the possibilities of Singapore, we quickly realized that there were also some very interesting sites pretty close by in the southernmost part of the Malay Peninsula. In the end it just proved too tempting for us to include some of these, and we ended up spending five full days in the two countries combined.

We never regretted that decision, even if we could also easily have spent more time in Taiwan, and while birding was just as good as expected, mammal watching was even better than we had dreamed of. Since the weather was also very much on our side, and we experienced five mosquito and leech free days, we couldn't have asked for more really, and we thoroughly enjoyed our stay here.

The reports on Singapore by Vladimir Dinets and Mike Hoit, found here on Mammalwatching.com, were a big inspiration and help for us, and Vladimir was even kind enough to help us with further information by mail as well as some post trip ID questions. The mammals in the region visited is well covered by the excellent "A Field Guide to the Mammals of South-East Asia" by Charles M. Francis.

Unfortunately, we haven't yet purchased any of the thermal scopes which seem to be popular with diehard mammal watchers these days, so we had to rely on good torches instead. Even so the results of our dark-hour activities were much better than expected, but it would be ever so interesting to know how much more we'd have seen, had we brought a thermal scope.

A more detailed report with more emphasis on birds can be found on Cloudbirders.com:

<https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/show/25272/37862>

Any questions, except about the Pangolin, are welcome on either sej@primoris.dk or jon.lehmberg@gmail.com

ITINERARY

28/1 Flying out from Taipei in the afternoon, arriving in Singapore in the evening. Collecting our rental car and checking into the Changi Cove Hotel.

29/1 Going to Pasir Ris Park (1.375665, 103.951772) around Sunrise. Breakfast at, and checking out of, the hotel. Visiting Lorong Halus Wetlands before going to the border to Malaysia. Crossed the border early in the afternoon and drove onwards to Kota Tinggi. Checked in at Kota Heritage Hotel before spending late afternoon at Bunker Trail in Panti Forest Reserve (1.979059, 103.921939). Did a couple of hours spotlighting in the evening there as well.

30/1 Full day spent on Bunker Trail (1.875991, 103.924921) in Panti Forest Reserve, including a longer spotlighting session than yesterday between sunset and 10.40 PM.

31/1 Early check out from the hotel. Drove north past Panti Forest Reserve. Morning, from just after sunrise, spent in Lenggong Forest Reserve (2.259281, 103.731099) which we left at 11.20 AM. Drove back to Johor Bahru via Kluang. Crossed the border back into Singapore mid-afternoon. Drove directly to Hotel 81 Premier Hollywood in Geylang and checked in. Spotlighted around the Central Water Catchment Area.

1/2 Most of the day spent on the island of Pulau Ubin. Late afternoon at Changi Business Park and MacRitchie Reservoir without seeing any mammals at all. Spotlighting all evening at Winsor Nature Park (1.359470, 103.827012) where we took a wrong turn, and therefore didn't have time to go to other places.

2/2 Morning at Kranji Marsh and Sungei Buloh Wetlands (1.445280, 103.730241). Afternoon spent at Ulu Pandan Park Connector before checking out of our hotel. Flying home late in the evening.

GPS-coordinates mark entry points to localities where any mammals were seen.

MAMMAL LIST

Black-striped Squirrel (*Callosciurus nigrovittatus*)

30/1 2 Panti Forest Reserve

Plantain Squirrel (*Callosciurus notatus*)

29/1 6 Pasir Ris Park

29+30/1 2+3 Panti Forest Reserve

2/2 2 Sungei Buloh Wetlands

- While Plantain Squirrel is common and widespread in a number of wooded habitats, Black-striped Squirrel is much more attached to good quality forest, we found. Both species were probably a little overlooked by us.

Slender Squirrel (*Sundasciurus tenuis*)

29+30/1 3+6 Panti Forest Reserve

31/1 4 Lenggong Forest Reserve

- Possibly a few Low's Squirrel around as well. These two species are very similar, and some individuals were only seen fleetingly or at a distance. However, the ones we saw well enough to identify with any kind of certainty all belonged to this species... – we think.



Slender Squirrel



Black Flying Squirrel

Black Flying Squirrel (*Aeromys tephromelas*)

30/1 1 Panti Forest Reserve

- Seen at the very edge of the forest along Bunker Trail, some 3-400 metres from the highway, where it was sitting quietly eating for approximately 10 minutes, before slowly starting to move around. It was extremely nice to see it so well through the telescope, but it was a little too distant to get really good photos.

Annandale's Rat (*Rattus annandalei*)

1/2 1 Windsor Nature Park

- We also saw two other rats in Windsor NP, but none of them well enough for a positive identification.

Long-tailed Giant Rat (*Leopoldamys sabanus*)

29/1 1 Panti Forest Reserve

- A whopper of a rodent which we saw crossing Bunker Trail immediately in front of our car deep inside the forest. Easily recognisable by its size, colour and extremely long tail.

Sunda Pangolin (*Manis javanica*)

XX/XX 1 Undisclosed location

- Certainly, one of the absolute highlights of the trip. We probably “caught” it just as it had emerged from its den, and saw it extremely well before it disappeared underground again. Since we didn’t want to disturb it unnecessarily, we moved on by then, even if we would have loved to spend more time with this weird and cool species. This is no doubt the same animal seen by Vladimir Dinets in September 2018. We are of course aware that many mammal watchers would like to see pangolins, but given the status of this species, we won’t be giving any details about this particular observation – sorry about that!



Small-toothed Palm Civet (*Arctogalidia trivirgata*)

29+30/1 1+1 Panti Forest Reserve

- Apparently an almost exclusively arboreal species. These two animals were seen 3-4 kilometres apart and we reckon they must have been different individuals. A rather cool species which can move through the canopy with impressive speed and agility, and which we saw very well.

Binturong (*Arctictis binturong*)

29/1 1 Panti Forest Reserve

- Seen crossing Bunker Trail, less than a kilometre from the highway, just after sunset. Unfortunately, we didn’t get any photos since the light was a little low, it was a little too far away, and we only saw it for less than half a minute. However, we did see this wonderful species really well through our binoculars, and were very excited about this unexpected encounter.

Short-tailed Mongoose (*Herpestes brachyurus*)

30/1 2 Panti Forest Reserve

- Both were seen rather briefly crossing Bunker Trail.



Smooth-coated Otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*)

29/1 5 Pasir Ris Park

- We only just manage to get to the bridge (1.380641, 103.953896), crossing Tampines River, in time to see the otters swimming out from the river to the sea at sunrise. Here they put on quite a show on the beach, much to the amusement of people passing by, before moving on further east.

We also found what we think were footprints from otters on the road by a small stream in Lenggor Forest Reserve, though probably from one of the smaller species?

Lesser Short-nosed Fruit Bat (*Cynopterus brachyotis*)

31/1 15 Mandai Trail

1/2 25 Windsor Nature Park

2/2 38 Sungei Buloh Wetlands

- The bats at Sungei Buloh were hanging from the roof outside the visitor centre. The rest were mostly seen flying around, obviously congregating at fruiting trees. We can't be absolutely certain that one of the other small fruit bat species weren't around as well, but the ones we saw well enough for a positive identification all belonged to this species.

We also saw a handful of unidentified bats in Panti FR and at Mandai Trail, but none of them well enough for us to attempt identifying them.

Sunda Colugo (*Galeopterus variegatus*)

31/1 6 Mandai Trail

1/2 1 Windsor Nature Park

- Surely one of the weirdest mammals you'll ever see, and we were lucky enough to see them really well, especially along Mandai Trail. They appear to be quite common residents of wooded areas in Singapore. Therefore, it was perhaps a little surprising that we didn't find any in Malaysia, though they are of course well camouflaged. We know, however, that they are seen in Panti Forest from time to time also.



Sunda Slow Loris (*Nycticebus coucang*)

29+30/1 1+5 Panti Forest Reserve

- Slow indeed! But also pretty cute little animals which were much more common in Panti Forest than we had anticipated. Most were seen in the canopy along Bunker Trail, but one was climbing around in some low shrubbery, at the western edge of the forest, and therefore seen extremely well, as the frontpage photo will suggest.

Banded Leaf Monkey (*Presbytis femoralis*)

30/1 4 Panti Forest Reserve

- Unfortunately, this small group was not seen close enough for photos, and only rather briefly.

Dusky Langur (*Trachypithecus obscurus*)

29+30/1 9+13 Panti FR

31/1 4 Lenggor Forest Reserve

- Seen in small groups, some of which contained juveniles young enough to still be carried around by their mothers. It was interesting to see how differently coloured these young langurs were compared with the adults – see below.



Long-tailed Macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*)

29+30/1 16+15 Panti Forest Reserve

31/1 17 Lenggor Forest Reserve

- The males are perky looking dudes with mohawks and moustaches. We did see this species inside the forest, but most were hanging around by the side of the big roads cutting through, thus being rather conspicuous.

Southern Pig-tailed Macaque (*Macaca nemestrina*)

29+30/1 1+3 Panti Forest Reserve

- A rather weird looking macaque with its almost bodybuilder-like appearance. We found it to be much more shy than its smaller long-tailed cousin, and only saw solitary individuals, probably all males.



White-handed Gibbon (*Hylobates lar*)

30/1 h+4 Panti Forest Reserve

31/1 h Lenggor Forest Reserve

- We love gibbons! Not only are their acrobatics high in the canopy fantastic to watch, but their morning song is also the coolest soundtrack to birding in the South-East Asian rainforest, you can imagine. We heard what we believe were 4 or 5 groups in Panti Forest and 3 or 4 groups in Lenggor Forest. We were also lucky to see one of the Panti groups pretty close to Bunker Trail, though sadly not within shooting range of our cameras.

Eurasian Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*)

31/1 1 Lenggor Forest Reserve

1/2 7 Pulau Ubin

- The piggies on Pulau Ubin were mostly seen around Chek Jawa Wetlands on the easternmost point of the island. They seemed quite accustomed to people, and therefore rather approachable. They were all sows or young animals. The big boar in Lenggor Forest, on the other hand, was definitely a male, and it came charging across the track some 50 metres in front of us. In fact, it was in such a hurry, that we half expected a Tiger or Leopard to follow, but sadly that didn't happen.

The road leading through Lenggor Forest was studded with tracks made by pigs in many places, and we also found similar tracks, though fewer, in Panti Forest where we know that both Bearded Pig and Wild Boar is sometimes seen.



Introduced species

Sambar (*Rusa unicolor*)

31/1 1 Mandai Trail

- Though Sambar is widely distributed on the Malay Peninsula, the animals in Singapore are all introduced, as far as we know.



Species not seen

Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)

31/1 Lenggor Forest Reserve

- Of course, we also didn't see Tiger on all other localities visited! However, we met a local guy in Lenggor FR, claiming that a Tiger had been seen on the road just three days ago. We didn't find pug marks of big cats here, but Tiger being such an easily recognisable and well-known species, we reckon that his claim was not all together unbelievable. The number of pigs, and possibly other kinds of prey, also makes us believe that a Tiger could well be found in this area.

Sun Bear (*Helarctos malayanus*)

31/1 Lenggor Forest Reserve

- We found fairly fresh footprints which we're pretty sure belong to this species (see photo – lens cap diameter is 7,5cm).

Asian Elephant (*Elephas maximus*)

30/1 Panti Forest Reserve

31/1 Lenggor Forest Reserve

- Dung and footprint found in both places. The footprints in Lenggor FR were on top of the most recent tire tracks and thus very fresh indeed! We possible even heard elephants in the forest near the road where we parked the car.

