

НАУЧНЫЕ ЗАМЕТКИ RESEARCH NOTES

OCCURRENCE OF THE RED GIANT FLYING SQUIRREL (*PETAURISTA PETAURISTA*: SCIURIDAE) IN BANGLADESH

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This report confirms the presence of the red giant flying squirrel *Petaurista petaurista* from the Idgarh Reserve Forest in Cox's Bazar (North) Forest Division in the southern part of Bangladesh. The chestnut-red dorsal body colour, white ventral surface, large and flesh-coloured nostrils, and gray long tail with blackish tip confirm the observed species as a red giant flying squirrel. Long-term monitoring, habitat protection and its ecology need to be studied for initiating further steps to conserve it in Bangladesh.

Key words: Bangladesh, Conservation, Cox's Bazar, *Petaurista petaurista*, Red giant flying squirrel

Bangladesh houses 127 species of mammals within 87 genera, 35 families and 13 orders (IUCN Bangladesh, 2015). Sciuridae is one of the major groups of rodents containing 9 species in Bangladesh (Ahmed et al., 2009; IUCN Bangladesh, 2015). They are mainly distributed in the planted vegetation, mixed-evergreen forest, deciduous forest and mangrove forest (Ahmed et al., 2009). Flying squirrels are the least studied rodent species in Bangladesh.

During surveying the western hoolock gibbon *Hoolock hoolock* (Harlan, 1834) population on 25 May 2017, one flying squirrel was seen sleeping on a bough of a *Dipterocarpus* sp. tree and the individual was identified as a red giant squirrel *Petaurista petaurista* (Pallas, 1766) (Fig. 1).

The chestnut-red dorsal body colour, white ventral surface, large and flesh-coloured nostrils, and gray long tail with blackish tip (Menon, 2014) confirmed its identification. This species can be distinguished from the Hodgson's flying squirrel *Petaurista magnificus* (Hodgson, 1836) and other similar species of flying squirrels present in the Indian sub-continent by its flesh-coloured nostrils, non-bushy long gray tail with black tip (Menon, 2014). The species was seen in the mixed-evergreen degraded forest at Idgarh Reserve Forest of Cox's Bazar District in the southern part of Bangladesh (Fig. 2).

This area is only about 20 km far away from Myanmar border and the geographical co-ordina-

tion is 21°32'59.40" N and 92°07'24.35" E. There are human settlements at the periphery of the forest where the squirrel was spotted. The major tree species of the forested areas are: *Swintonia floribunda* Griff., *Brownlowia elata* Roxb., *Dipterocarpus* spp., *Tetrameles nudiflora* R.Br., *Artocarpus chama* Roxb., *Aphanamixis polystachya* Wall, *Hopea odorata* Roxb., *Lagerstroemia* spp., *Syzygium* spp., *Magnifera longipes* Griff., *Ficus* spp. and *Gmelina arborea* Roxb. ex Sm.

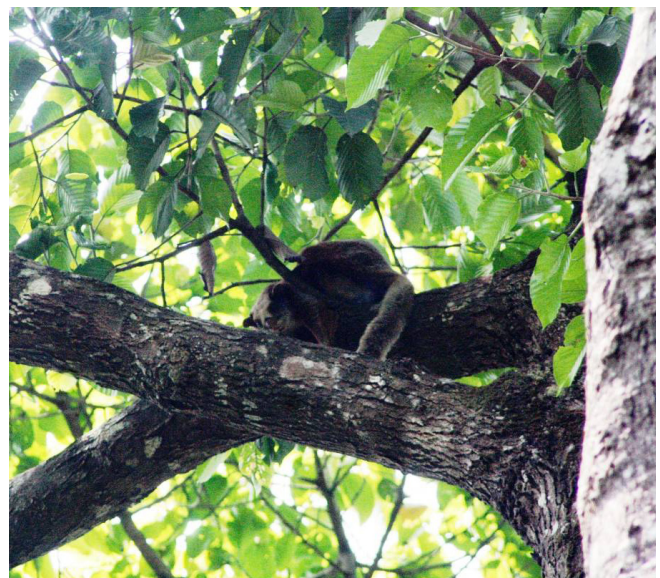


Fig. 1. Observed red giant flying squirrel (*Petaurista petaurista*) on a bough of a *Dipterocarpus* sp. at the Idgarh Reserve Forest in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

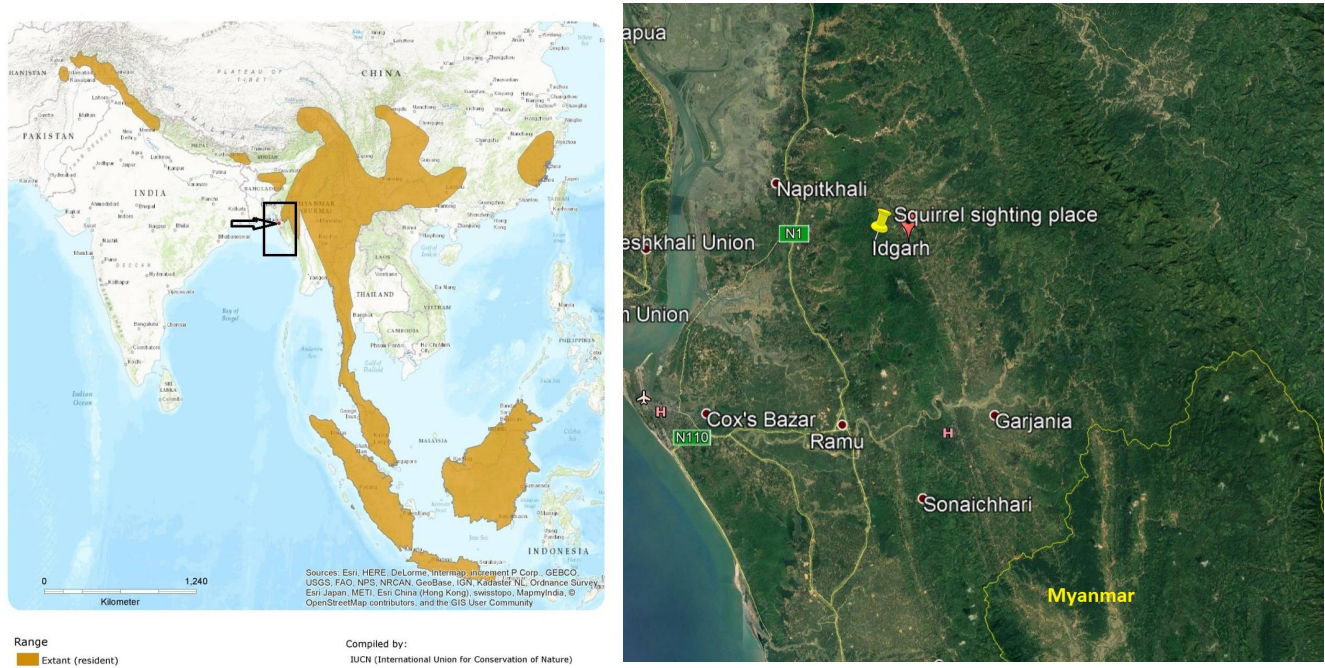


Fig. 2. The range of the red giant flying squirrel (red dot inside the black rectangle and place mark indicate the sighting location) (According to Duckworth, 2016; Goggle Earth).

Several authors (e.g., M.A.R. Khan, 1982, 2015; Sarker & Sarker, 1988; M.M.H. Khan, 2008) mentioned the occurrence of the red giant flying squirrel in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) without mentioning any specific location. M.A.R. Khan (1982) reported the presence of this species in Bangladesh from a skin collected from Mahalchari forest of Khagrachari District by a Divisional Forest Officer of CHTs of Forest Department. M.A.R. Khan (2015) also forecasted that this species is possibly very rare or exterminated from the northeast forests of Bangladesh. Sarker & Sarker (1988) mentioned its occasional occurrence in CHTs and Sylhet forests. M.M.H. Khan (2008) assumed its presence in the southeast forests of Bangladesh. Kamruzzaman (2009) reported its presence in the southeast region of Bangladesh from secondary sources. The red giant flying squirrel is considered as Data Deficient species in Bangladesh (M.M.H. Khan, 2015) but globally it is Least Concern (Duckworth, 2016). Bangladesh is not included in the global distribution of this species (e.g., Srivasulu et al., 2004; Thorington et al., 2012; Menon, 2014; Sanamxay et al., 2015), although it may occur in the CHTs (M.M.H. Khan, 2015). The above reports (e.g., M.A.R. Khan, 1982, 2015; Sarker & Sarker, 1988; M.M.H. Khan, 2008; Kamruzzaman, 2009) instigated Duckworth (2016) to include Bangladesh in the world distributional range of the species as presumably occurrence. The presence of this species in Assam in India (Ray et al., 2012), is quite far away from the present sighting

place of Bangladesh. Sharma et al. (2014) mentioned its distributional range from Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Uttaranchal in India; Nepal and Pakistan of South Asia. The world distribution of this species is Afghanistan, India, China, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam and Thailand (Duckworth, 2016).

The observing site of red giant flying squirrel is an edge of mixed evergreen degraded forest near to human settlement. Local people regularly enter into the forest for their daily needs (mostly collecting firewood and stems for household uses for both personal and commercial basis), and destroy the habitat of the squirrel and other wildlife. Enforcement of the forest protection law (Forest Law, 1927) and wildlife law [Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, 2012], regular patrolling, and community approach of biodiversity conservation can reduce the habitat destruction of the squirrel and other wildlife at Idgarh Reserve Forest. The occurrence of this species in other areas of Bangladesh has not yet been confirmed, so it is considered as less known mammal in Bangladesh. For this reason, an extensive programme should be taken to study the population, habitat preference and ecology of this species in Bangladesh.

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НАХОДКА ГИГАНТСКОЙ ЛЕТЯГИ (*PETAURISTA PETAURISTA*: SCIURIDAE) В БАНГЛАДЕШ

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Это сообщение подтверждает существование гигантской летяги (*Petaurista petaurista*) в заповеднике Идгар в лесном отделе Кокс-Базар в южной части Бангладеш. Спина каштаново-красного цвета, белое брюхо, большие, мясного цвета ноздри и серый длинный хвост с черноватым концом подтверждают, что наблюдаемый вид – это гигантская летяга. Долговременный мониторинг, сохранение местообитания и его экология нуждаются в изучении для следующей стадии сохранения вида в Бангладеш.

Ключевые слова: *Petaurista petaurista*, Бангладеш, гигантская летяга, Кокс-Базар, сохранение