

## SHORT COMMUNICATION

Predation by the Grey Leaf Monkey (*Presbytis hosei*)  
on the Contents of a Bird's Nest at  
Mt. Kinabalu Park, Sabah

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**ABSTRACT.** An adult male grey leaf monkey (*Presbytis hosei*) was observed in Mt. Kinabalu Park, Sabah, Malaysia, raiding the nest of a grey-throated babbler (*Stachyris nigriceps*). The monkey removed from the nest and ate at least two eggs and perhaps one young hatchling. This incident appears to be the first reported case of any *Presbytis* spp. consuming animal prey.

**Key Words:** *Presbytis hosei*; Predation; *Stachyris nigriceps*; Sabah.

## OBSERVATION

The leaf monkeys or langurs belonging to the genus *Presbytis* are widely distributed from the Indian subcontinent to Borneo (HONACKI et al., 1982). These diurnal and arboreal monkeys play an important ecological role in the region's rain-forests as the principal shoot- and leaf-eating mammal (MEDWAY, 1970). Excluding a few recorded cases of invertebrate consumption, wild *Presbytis* spp. are thought to be almost exclusively herbivores.

In the early morning of April 8, 1988 I was walking along the Silau-Silau Trail, approximately 1,500 m altitude and 1 km below the Mt. Kinabalu Park administration building, Sabah, Malaysia. At about 7:00 hours a troop of six grey leaf monkeys (*P. hosei*), composed of at least one adult male and one adult female, was noticed moving through the mid-canopy of the forest. The adult male came to rest on a limb about 10 m above the ground and 4 m directly above a large bird's nest fern (*Asplenium* cf. *nidus*) growing epiphytically on a forest tree.

All at once the male monkey jumped off the branch into the center of the fern and began to tear through a mass of fronds, twigs, and other vegetation. Within a few seconds an adult grey-throated babbler (*Stachyris nigriceps*) flew out of the fern as the monkey reached into the plant, removed, and ate at least two eggs and perhaps one small hatchling.

Within 30 sec of consuming the nest contents, the monkey climbed up into a nearby tree to join the rest of the troop. When the male was about 20 m from the fern he noticed my presence, gave a series of grunt-like calls, and the complete troop fled into the forest.

## DISCUSSION

*Presbytis hosei* has been recorded several times on Mt. Kinabalu. CHASEN and KLOSS (1931) considered this monkey a lowland species, ranging up to a height of 1,000–1,300 m

on the mountain. ALLEN and COOLIDGE (1940) found *P. hosei* in the area up to 1,300 m; they considered it rare and confined to primeval forest.

The only specific mention on the food habits of *P. hosei* appears to be DAVIS (1962) who found stomachs of collected specimens "filled with finely ground green material, presumably leaves." In his review of non-human primate diets, HARDING (1981) did not locate a single report in the literature of a *Presbytis* sp. consuming animal prey, although numerous detailed feeding studies have been conducted on this genus; two species, *P. entellus* and *P. johnii*, are known to ingest invertebrates. A small percentage of the diet of *P. melalophos* from West Malaysia, *P. rubicunda* from Borneo, and *P. senex* from Sri Lanka is also composed of insects (CURTIN, 1976; HLADIK, 1977; BENNETT, 1983; DAVIES, 1984). MEDWAY (1969) noted that in captivity *P. cristata*, a species also occurring on Borneo, generally refuses meat, but will consume hard-boiled eggs. However, there appears to be no published report of any wild *Presbytis* sp. preying upon vertebrates. Even though the observation of *P. hosei* eating the contents of a bird's nest was serendipitous it shows that a group of monkeys thought to be almost exclusively herbivores indeed on occasion exploits animal prey.

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