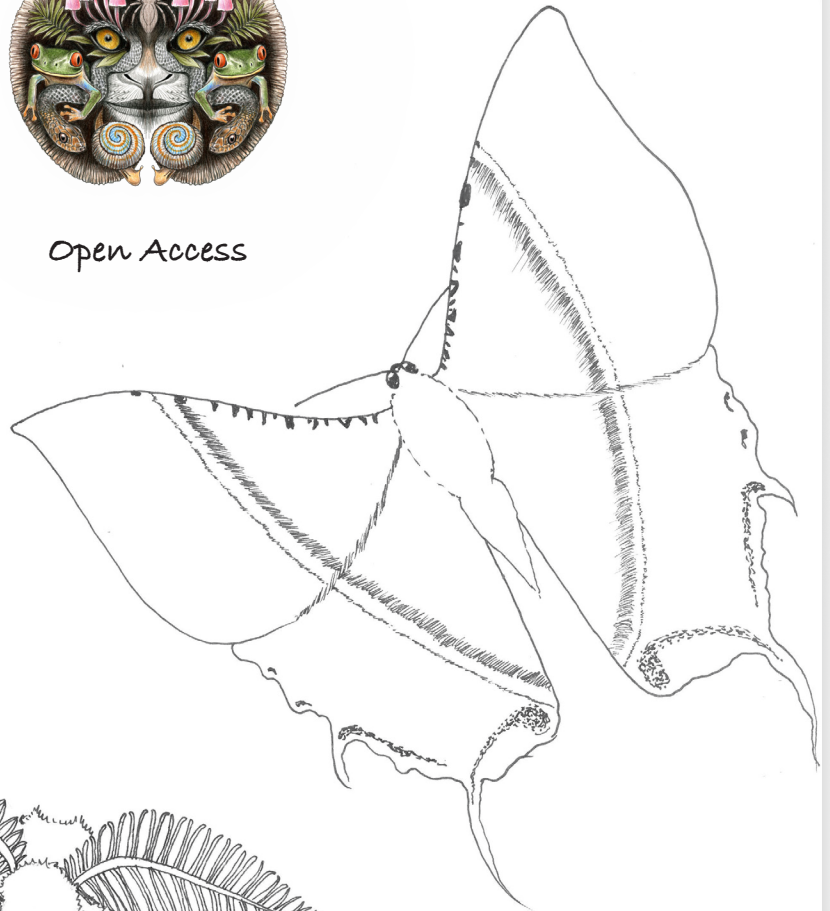
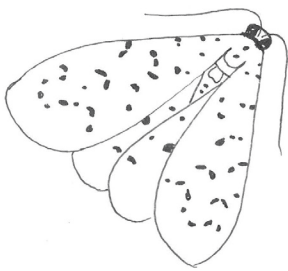


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continued on the back inside cover

Cover: Celebrating the unsung heroes—moths, our nocturnal pollinators. © Priyanka Iyer.



NOTE

Unusual foraging behaviour of the Bengal Slow Loris *Nycticebus bengalensis* (Lacépède, 1800) (Mammalia: Primates: Lorisidae) in the Shan Highlands, Myanmar

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The Bengal Slow Loris *Nycticebus bengalensis* is a nocturnal, arboreal, and slow-moving animal, which is native to southern and southeastern Asia. It has the largest geographical range of the four species of the genus *Nycticebus* (Rogers & Nekaris 2011; Nijman 2015; Oliver et al. 2019; Nekaris et al. 2020), comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, northeastern India, China, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Found in evergreen, semi-evergreen and deciduous forest, and degraded areas (Rajamani et al. 2009; Swapna et al. 2009; Das et al. 2014; Francis 2019), it frequents large, tall trees with dense foliage canopy (Pliosungnoen et al. 2010), forest edges, and human-modified landscapes, including heavily disturbed areas, such as home gardens (Das et al. 2014, 2016; Kumar et al. 2014). It can move through thick grass along the ground when tree canopy is lacking (Starr et al. 2010; Rogers & Nekaris 2011).

The diet of *Nycticebus bengalensis* includes plant exudates (gum), bark, leaves, nectar, fruit, small invertebrates, and birds' eggs (Swapna et al. 2009; Rogers & Nekaris 2011; Das et al. 2014; Oliver et al. 2019; Nekaris et al. 2020). It lives singly, in pairs, or in family

groups (Ankel-Simons 2006; Al-Razi et al. 2020). Currently categorized as Endangered, on account of habitat loss and over hunting (Nekaris et al. 2020), in Myanmar it is theoretically fully protected by the Protection of Biodiversity and Conservation Areas Law, 2018. However, live Bengal Slow Lorises and their parts are extensively traded on the Sino-Myanmar border, especially in Mong La, eastern Shan State, where, according to Nijman et al. (2014), 'thousands of individuals are killed annually to supply the demand from this one market alone'.

Although considered to be widely distributed in Myanmar (Francis 2019; Nekaris et al. 2020), there is little information about the in-country distribution, ecology, and behaviour of this cryptic primate because of its nocturnal lifestyle and arboreal habits. Yin (1993) includes historical records from Tanintharyi Region (Meyik = Mergui, Kadankyun = King Island), Mon State (Kyaikkhami = Amherst), Kayin State (Thandaung), Rakhine State (no data), Sagaing Region (Kindat) and Kachin State (Bhamo, Hai Bum, Singaling Hkamti). Nijman (2015) includes two individuals from near Saw Law in Kachin State and reports that they are rarely seen in

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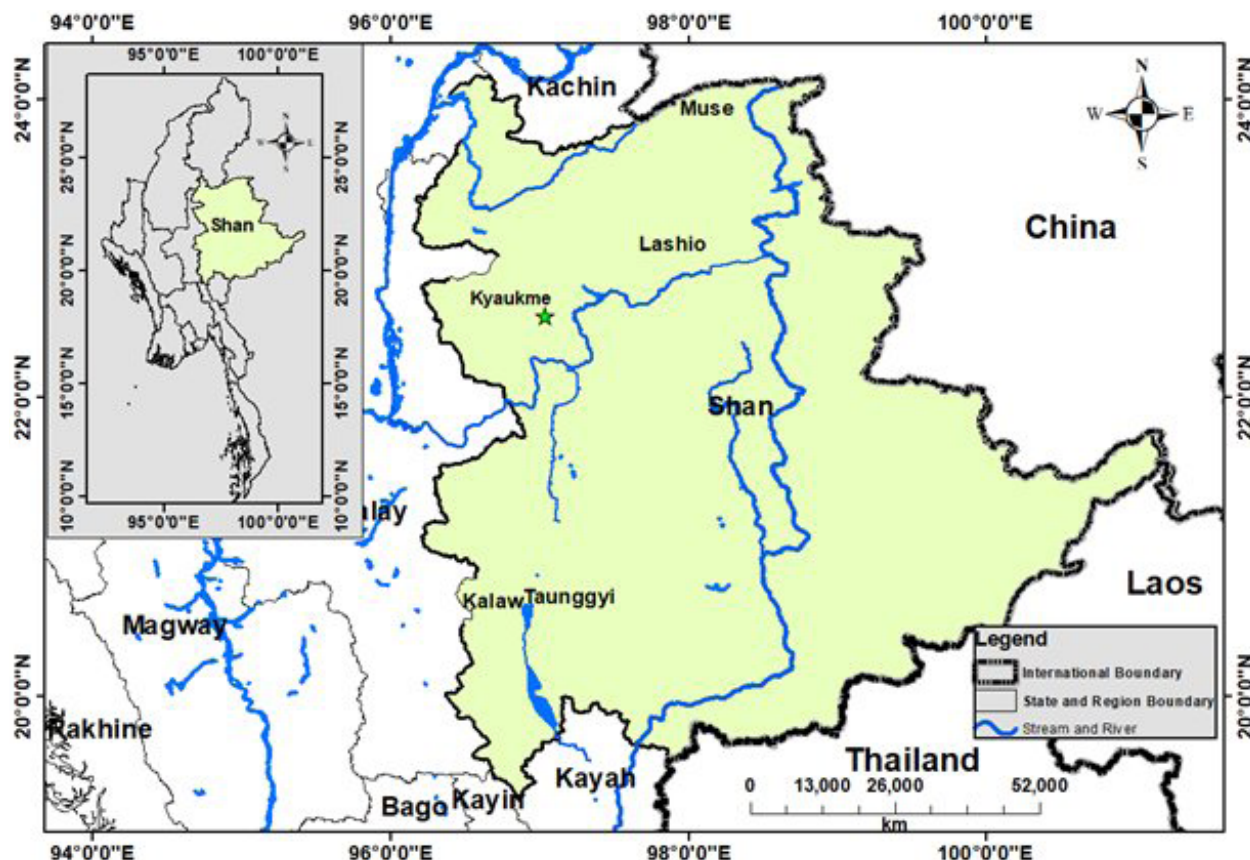


Figure 1. Kyaukme (green star), northern Shan State, where the Bengal Slow Loris was recorded.

this area. On 21 May 2019, a Slow Loris was observed in degraded forest, at an elevation of 1,100 m in Ywangan Township (21.2219°N, 96.5578°E) in southern Shan State.

Recently, a single *Nycticebus bengalensis* was seen entering a house and climbing up to a roof beam where it found nest of a Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*. This happened on 30 April 2022, at 2230 h, in a suburban area of Kyaukme, northern Shan State, Myanmar (22.5489°N, 97.0397°E) (Figure 1). The male slow loris captured one sparrow, which it devoured for about 45 min. It sat on a beam, and after first biting the bird's head, it fed on its prey slowly (Image 1). Although it ate the bones of the bird, it removed most, but not all of the feathers, which fell to the floor (similar observations were made for the Javan Slow Loris *Nycticebus javanicus* in Indonesia (Cabana et al. 2017)). Subsequently, the Loris captured another sparrow and fed again. It was observed that at times it stayed upside down, with its hind feet clinging to the beams of the house, whilst eating its prey. It appeared to be either unaware of the presence of humans or not afraid, as the animal was photographed from within 5 m.

After feeding, the animal climbed down slowly and

started to leave the house at 2335 h (30 April 2022) (Image 2). It exited on the electric service line at 0050 h (1 May 2022) (Image 3). Unfortunately, it was not possible to follow this nocturnal animal and record its sleeping quarters as there was a night-time curfew (from 2000–0500 h) in the region after the February 2021 coup. As in Bangladesh (Al-Razi et al. 2019), there is a report (Wildlife of Myanmar, 2022) of a Bengal Slow Loris being electrocuted on a power line in Banmaw (Bhamo), Kachin State, Myanmar.

Situated at an elevation of approximately 780 m, the climate of Kyaukme is humid subtropical with an annual rainfall of about 2,100 mm and a mean annual temperature of 28.9°C. The urban area of Kyaukme is approximately 9.5 km², with a population of some 46,000 individuals (General Administration Department 2019). The house where the slow loris was observed is located within a highly disturbed, anthropogenically modified, mosaic of habitats. There is a bamboo grove and a small wood within 100 m and 200 m, respectively, of the house. In Indonesia, the presence of bamboo in human-modified environments has proved important for Javan Slow Loris conservation as it provides essential sleep sites (Nekaris



Image 1. The Bengal Slow Loris feeding on a Eurasian Tree Sparrow within the house. © SSLO



Image 2. The Bengal Slow Loris showing its prominent midline stripe as it climbs down before leaving the house. © SSLO



Image 3. The Bengal Slow Loris moving away from the house on the electricity supply cable. © Sai Aung Tun Thein

et al. 2017). It is noteworthy that Kyaukme is situated en route to the Sino-Myanmar border, with its active wildlife markets and a high demand for wild animals.

This recent observation provides surprising new information about the diet of *Nycticebus bengalensis* and its habituation to highly disturbed urban environments. It suggests that in Myanmar, as elsewhere, urban habitats can serve as a refuge for endangered species (Becker & Buchholz 2016). To understand better its local and national conservation needs, we recommend more detailed studies of the Bengal Slow Loris's ecology, especially habitat preferences, population status and behaviour.

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