

**FIRST RECORD OF A LARGE-BILLED CROW FEEDING ON A NORTHERN
PALM SQUIRREL IN URBAN BANGLADESH**

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The Large-billed Crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) is an omnivorous species feeding on fruits, invertebrates (earthworms, snails, and insects), birds (doves, starlings, and sparrows), bird eggs and nestlings, small mammals (rats, mice, squirrels, cats), carrion, and food waste in urban areas (Kurosawa *et al.*, 2003; Hajime, 2007; Karunarathna and Amarasinghe, 2009). Several studies have documented their predatory behaviour on a wide range of taxa, including waders (Das *et al.*, 2020), Indian Roofed Turtle *Pangshura tecta* (Arjun *et al.*, 2022), Ceylon Pygmy Lizard *Cophotis ceylanica* (Karunarathna and Amarasinghe, 2009), and Japanese Murrelets *Synthliboramphus wumizusume* (Kongsurakan *et al.*, 2023). Bera *et al.* (2023) reported an observation of a Jungle Crow (*Corvus culminatus*) predated a Three-striped Palm Squirrel (*Funambulus palmarum*) in Howrah, West Bengal, India. However, no prior records exist of this species feeding on the Northern Palm Squirrel (*Funambulus pennanti*).

On 11 June 2024, at 1307 h in Suhrawardy Udyan (23.735°N, 90.400°E), Dhaka, we observed a Large-billed Crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) was flying with a Northern Palm Squirrel (*Funambulus pennanti*) in its beak. The crow landed, secured the squirrel with its feet, and began feeding from the head region for about 19 minutes (Figure 1), consumed approximately 70% of the body. The squirrel appeared freshly dead, with visible liquid blood on the feeding ground. While these signs suggest the crow may have hunted the squirrel, we did not witness the act of killing, and recent scavenging remains a plausible alternative explanation.

Three House Crows chased the Large-billed Crow to snatch the squirrel, but only one managed to get a small amount of meat. Then, a second Large-billed Crow perched on the remaining squirrel's body and immediately began eating the remnant (Figure 2). Subsequently, a third Large-Billed Crow snatched the carcass, consuming approximately 20% of the body in 8 minutes while perched on a tree branch (Figure 3). It then flew away with the remaining skin to a nearby House Crow colony. After that, all the crows nearby gathered, snatched

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the remaining body, and began cawing loudly. The observation spanned for about 30 minutes. The Northern Palm Squirrel (*Funambulus pennanti*) is a diurnal, semi-arboreal species historically confined to the west of the Jamuna



Fig. 1. Large-billed Crow preying on a Northern Palm Squirrel at Suhrawardy Udyan, Dhaka City, Bangladesh. (Photo Credit: Sajib Biswas)



Fig. 2. Another Large-billed Crow preparing the Squirrel's body for better consumption. (Photo Credit: Sajib Biswas)



Fig. 3. Large-billed Crow feeding from the anal side of the squirrel on a tree branch after snatching it from another crow. (Photo Credit: Sajib Biswas)

River in Bangladesh, but today it is widespread in urban parks due to habitat modification and reduced predation pressure (Ahmed *et al.*, 2021; Arefin and Hasan, 2022). Although potential predators like the Small Indian Mongoose (*Herpestes auropunctatus*) and Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*) exist in urban parks, no predation event on this squirrel has been documented in Bangladesh (Arefin and Hasan 2022). Our observation is the first recorded case of a Large-billed Crow feeding on a Northern Palm Squirrel in Bangladesh. Further systematic studies are needed to determine the extent of predation on squirrels by crows and whether such interactions may influence squirrel populations in urban environments. While our observation does not establish a regular predatory behavior or ecological role, it suggests a potential for opportunistic predation.

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