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## **Hunting and usage of flying squirrels in central Taiwan**

Hsiang Ling CHEN<sup>1</sup> and Ying WANG<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Natural Resources and the Environment, University of Arizona, AZ 85721, USA (cherlene@email.arizona.edu)

<sup>2</sup>Department of Life Science, National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, 116, Taiwan

Overexploitation is a significant problem of conservation and wildlife. Hunting was banned in Taiwan when the Forestry Bureau enacted the Wildlife Conservation Law in 1989, but illegal hunting occurs frequently. Red and white giant flying squirrel (*Petaurista alborufus lena*) and Formosan giant flying squirrel (*Petaurista petaurista grandis*) were major game species of aborigines but information of contemporary hunting is absent. To investigate hunting activities and usage of flying squirrels, we interviewed 125 hunters and hired local reporters to record 463 hunting events from 2004 to 2006 at Danda in central Taiwan. 1369 flying squirrels were hunted exclusively by firearm in two years. Harvest is mainly consumed as food while the pelt usually is abandoned. We estimated about 50 % of harvest was sold to outsiders and the price is from US\$ 15 to 30 for one flying squirrel. Over 30 % of hunters preferred hunt flying squirrels because of their high economic value, light weight, and good taste. Many hunters noted that harvest of flying squirrels was declining from 20 individuals per night before to less than 5 individuals in nowadays. Our study suggests that illegal hunting is a potential threat of flying

squirrels in Taiwan and investigating reason of decline in harvest is necessary.