

SHORT COMMUNICATION

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A NEW SUBSPECIES OF THE METAD, *MILLARDIA MELTADA* (GRAY, 1837) [RODENTIA : MURIDAE] FROM WEST BENGAL

In connection with the study of field rodents at Singur, Hugli District, West Bengal (c 34 kilometres northwest of Calcutta), the authors collected an adult female specimen and five juveniles of the Metad, *Millardia meltada* (Gray), on the 17th February, 1978. The species was recorded for the first time from West Bengal and its distribution extended further eastward (Mandal and Ghosh, 1980). Subsequently, a good number of specimens of the species were collected from the same area by digging the burrows in the harvested paddy fields. While studying them it was found that they did not fit in any of the known subspecies of the species. They are, therefore, accommodated in a new subspecies.

All the measurements are in millimetres and refer to adult specimens only. The external measurements were taken by the collectors in the field. For cranial measurements, Ellerman (1963) has been followed. Colour names given with initial capital letters in the text have been recognized after Ridgway's (1912) nomenclature.

OBSERVATIONS

Order RODENTIA

Family MURIDAE

Millardia meltada singuri, new subspecies

Holotype : Zoological Survey of India,
Registration Number (Z. S. I. Reg. No.

20457) ; adult female ; Singur, Hugli District, West Bengal ; 17th January 1980 ; collected by Ajoy Kumar Mandal and Santanu Ghosh. Skin and skull deposited in the National Zoological Collection, Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta.

Paratypes : Z. S. I. Reg. Nos. 20453♂, 16th January 1980 ; 20454♂, 17th January 1980 ; 20455♂, 17th January 1980 ; 19935♀, 17th February 1978 ; 20456♀, 16th January 1980 ; Singur, Hugli District, West Bengal. All collected by Ajoy Kumar Mandal and Santanu Ghosh. Specimens deposited in the National Zoological Collection, Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta.

Description :

Compared with *Millardia m. meltada* and *Millardia m. pallidior*, the new subspecies (*Millardia meltada singuri*) can readily be distinguished by the following combination of characters, *viz.*, dorsal colouration Mouse Gray instead of Smoke Grey in *pallidior* and intermediate between Smoke Grey and Mouse Grey in *meltada*. Ventral colour greyish instead of creamish in *pallidior* and basal part of ventral hairs Blackish Slate instead of Slaty Grey in *meltada*.

Skull more or less similar to that of the other two Indian subspecies, but differs from them in upper molar tooth row and nasal being proportionately longer and smaller respectively as compared to the occipitonasal

TABLE 1. Summary of characters based on external and skull measurements in three subspecies of *Millardia meltada* (Gray)

Characters	<i>Millardia m. pallidior</i>	<i>Millardia m. meltada</i>	<i>Millardia m. singuri</i>
Head & body length	3♂♂ : 110-139 (119.6)* } (121.0) 2♀♀ : 115-130 (122.5) }	3♂♂ : 117-140 (128.3) } (130.9) 2♀♀ : 129-138 (133.5) }	3♂♂ : 107-152 (129.6) } (122.6) 3♀♀ : 111-119 (115.6) }
Tail length	2♂♂ : 86-114 (100) } (105.5) 1♀ : 111 (111) }	3♂♂ : 103-115 (109.3) } (109.4) 2♀♀ : 104-115 (109.5) }	1♂ : 126 (126) } (115) 1♀ : 104 (104) }
Tail length in relation to head and body length	2♂♂ : 78.1-82% (80%) } (82.3%) 1♀ : 84.6% (84.6%) }	3♂♂ : 82.1-88.3% (85.4%) } (83.6%) 2♀♀ : 80.6-83.3% (81.9%) }	1♂ : 82.9% (82.9%) } (85.1%) 1♀ : 87.3% (87.3%) }
Occipitonasal length	3♂♂ : 29.3-32.8 (30.8) } (30.6) 2♀♀ : 29.3-31.6 (30.4) }	3♂♂ : 27.9-33.9 (31.3) } (31.5) 2♀♀ : 29.3-34.3 (31.8) }	3♂♂ : 29.5-35.6 (32.5) } (31.5) 3♀♀ : 29.9-31.4 (30.6) }
Length of palatal foramen in relation to occipitonasal length	3♂♂ : 23.3-25.0% (24.1%) } (23.7) 2♀♀ : 22.5-24.1% (23.3%) }	3♂♂ : 24.2-25.9% (25%) } (24.4%) 2♀♀ : 23.5-24.1% (23.8%) }	3♂♂ : 24.2-25.3% (24.8%) } (24.5%) 3♀♀ : 23.8-24.6% (24.2%) }
Length of upper molar tooth row in relation to occipitonasal length	3♂♂ : 15.6-17.2% (16.4%) } (16.5%) 2♀♀ : 16.1-17.2% (16.6%) }	3♂♂ : 15.6-18.5% (17.4%) } (16.6%) 2♀♀ : 14.7-17.2% (15.9%) }	3♂♂ : 16.2-18.9% (17.3%) } (17.5%) 3♀♀ : 16.6-18.6% (17.7%) }
Length of nasal in relation to occipitonasal length	3♂♂ : 37.5-40% (38.4%) } (39.1%) 2♀♀ : 37.9-41.9% (39.9%) }	3♂♂ : 37.1-40.6% (39%) } (38.3%) 2♀♀ : 34.4-41.1% (37.7%) }	3♂♂ : 37.1-37.9% (37.5%) } (37%) 3♀♀ : 35.4-37.9% (36.6%) }
Length of bulla in relation to occipitonasal length	3♂♂ : 15.6-17.2% (16.4%) } (16.8%) 1♀ : 17.2% (17.2%) }	3♂♂ : 15.6-18.5% (17.4%) } (16.6%) 2♀♀ : 14.7-17.2% (15.9%) }	3♂♂ : 15.6-17.2% (16.6%) } (17.1%) 3♀♀ : 16.6-19.3% (17.7%) }

*Mean values are given in parentheses

length. Characters based on external and cranial measurements of the three subspecies

of *Millardia meltada* (Gray) have been summarised in Table 1.

Measurements :

External :

	Holotype ♀	3 ♂	Paratypes	2 ♀
Head and body	119	130, 107, 152,		111, 117
Tail	104	110+, 65+,		126 76+, 65+
Hind foot	23	26, 24, 25		22, 26
Ear	20	20, 18, 21,		20, 20

Cranial :

	Holotype ♀	3 ♂	Paratypes	2 ♀
Occipitonasal	29.9	32.6, 29.5, 35.6		31.4, 30.9
Condylbasal	28.3	31.5, 28.3, 34.4		30.5, 29.6
Nasal	11.2	12.5, 11.1, 13.5		11.5, 11.6
Interorbital width	4.6	4.7, 4.7, 5.3		4.7, 4.6
Palate	15.2	16.8, 15.2, 18.7		16.4, 15.7
Molar toothrow	5.4	5.4, 5.5, 5.7		5.6, 5.0
Bulla	5.8	5.9, 5.9, 6.3		6.1, 5.7
Diastema	8.2	9.3, 8.1, 10.3		8.8, 8.7
Palatal foramina	7.1	8.1, 7.3, 8.5		7.4, 7.4

Range : So far known only from the type locality.

Habitat : The cultivated paddy fields at Singur, Hugli District, West Bengal.

Habit : A docile creature with large eyes and ears, but an extremely fast runner.

Remarks : Ellerman (1963) has considered *Millardia* as a subgenus of *Rattus*, but Ellerman (1947) and subsequent authors (Misonne, 1969 ; Agrawal, 1970 ; Mishra and Dhanda, 1975) have treated it as a distinct genus. Here also *Millardia* has been recognised as a separate genus.

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