

Rec. zool. Surv. India, 85(2) : 363-365, 1988

ADDITION OF THE FAWN-COLOURED MOUSE,
MUS CERVICOLOR HODGSON, 1845 [RODENTIA :
MURIDAE] TO THE FAUNA OF SUNDERBANS IN
WEST BENGAL, INDIA

While examining a small collection of rodents obtained by Dr. A. K. Mondal, Superintending Zoologist, Zoological Survey of India, from Hemnagar in South Sunderbans, 24-Parganas District, West Bengal, three adult and seven juvenile grey-bellied mice with bicoloured tail were found. On closer examination they were found to be examples of the Fawn-coloured Mouse, *Mus cervicolor* Hodgson.

The southern half of 24-Parganas District of West Bengal is occupied by an 'active delta' system of saline soils, crisscrossed by enumerable tidal rivers, canals, and creeks at the mouth of the Ganga, forming a wilderness of swamps, morasses and forests, the Sunderbans. Its boundry is demarcated by the Raimangal and Hooghly rivers in the east and west respectively and the Bay of Bengal in the south. The northern limit of Sunderbans cannot be clearly defined due to progressive reclamation of the land over the last 150 years. The area lies approximately between 21°0'-21°21' N and 88°0'-89°0' E. It is a region of grassy savannahs and muddy islets covered with mangroves and dense evergreen forests. Its environmental condition is quite separate from the other parts of our country. To protect the biota of this region the Government of India recently has declared it as a National Park. Any addition to the fauna of this region is, therefore, require special mention.

According to authoritative literature this species occurs within the Indian limits in southern India, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh (Ellerman, 1961 ; Ellerman and Morrison-

Scott, 1966), Assam (Blanford, 1891 ; Ellerman, 1961 ; Ellerman and Morrison-Scott, 1966 ; Marshall, 1977), Manipur (Ellerman, 1961 ; Marshall, 1977), and Jammu and Kashmir (Chakraborty, 1983). Outside Indian limits, it occurs in Pakistan (Taber *et al.*, 1967), Sri Lanka (Ellerman, 1961 ; Ellerman and Morrison-Scott, 1966), Nepal (Hodgson, 1845 ; Blanford, 1891 ; Ellerman, 1961 ; Ellerman and Morrison-Scott, 1966 ; Marshall, 1977), Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam (Ellerman, 1961 ; Ellerman and Morrison-Scott, 1966 ; Marshall, 1977), Sumatra and Java in Indonesia (Marshall, 1977), and Ryukyu Islands in Japan (Ellerman, 1961 ; Ellerman and Morrison-Scott, 1966). The only report of this mouse West Bengal is at Singur in Hugly District (Mandal, 1976). However, it has not yet been reported from the Sunderbans in West Bengal. Hence the present material constitutes the first authentic record of its occurrence in the Sunderbans of West Bengal, India.

The details of the adult specimens are given below. The measurements were taken in the field by the collector. All measurements are taken after Ellerman (1961) and given in millimetres.

Material : 1 ♂, 2 ♀ ; Z.S.I. Registration Numbers 21258, 21259, 21260 ; in alcohol ; Hemnagar, South Sunderbans, 24-Parganas, West Bengal ; 28 December 1967 ; A. K. Mondal collector ; deposited in the National Zoological Collection of India, housed at the Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta.

Measurements :

External : Head and body 88, 82, 78 ; tail 79, 70, 59 ; hindfoot 17, 15, 16 ; ear 11, 11, 11.

Cranial : Occipitonasal 22.9, 21.8, 21.0 ; condylobasal 22.5, 21.3, 20.5 ; nasal 8.4, 8.2, 7.8 ; palate 12.1, 11.7, 11.4 ; bulla 3.2, 3.1, 3.0 ; molar tooth row 3.4, 3.3, 3.3 ; anterior palatal foramen 4.8, 4.7, 4.5 ; diastema 7.2, 6.6, 6.1.

The specimens were collected by the collector from fields.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is thankful to the Director, Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta, for providing facilities of this work and to Dr. V. C. Agrawal, Superintending Zoologist, for suggestion and encouragement.

Zoological Survey of India
535, New Alipur Road
'M' Block
Calcutta-700 053

Ajoy Kumar Mandal

REFERENCES

- BLANFORD, W. T. 1891. The fauna of British India, Mammalia. Taylor and Francis, London.
- CHAKRABORTY, S. 1983. Contribution to the knowledge of the mammalian fauna of Jammu and Kashmir, India. *Rec. zool. Surv. India, Occ. Paper (38)* : 1-129.
- ELLERMAN, J. R. 1961. The fauna of India, Mammalia, 3 (Rodentia). Govt. of India, Delhi.
- ELLERMAM, J. R. and MORRISON-SCOTT, T. C. S. 1966. A checklist of Palaearctic and Indian mammals. ed. 2. British Museum (Natural History), London.
- HODGSON, B. H. 1845. On the rats, mice and shrews of the central region of Nepal. *Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.*, 15 : 266-270.
- MANDAL, AJOY KUMAR, 1976. The occurrence of the Fawn-coloured Mouse, *Mus cervicolor cervicolor* Hodgson, in West Bengal. *Newsl. zool. Surv. India*, 2 : 249-251.
- MARSHALL, J. T. 1977. A Synopsis of the Asian species of *Mus* (Rodentia : Muridae). *Bull. Am. Mus. nat. Hist.*, 158 : 177-220.
- TABER, R. D., SHERI, A. N. and AHMED, M. S. 1967. Mammals of the Lyallpur region, West Pakistan. *J. Mammal.*, 48 : 392-407.