

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

**REDISCOVERY OF THE SMALL TRAVANCORE FLYING
SQUIRREL, *PETINOMYS FUSCOCAPILLUS FUSCOCAPILLUS*
(JERDON) FROM KERALA, INDIA.**

Close on the heels of the rediscovery of the Malabar Civet *Viverra megaspila civettina* Blyth (Kurup, 1986), I have great pleasure in reporting yet another rediscovery also from Kerala state, India. This time the species is the extremely rare small Travancore Flying Squirrel, *Petinomys fuscocapillus fuscocapillus* (Jerdon), one of several species of small flying squirrels in India, but the only one in southern India. Described in the year 1847 by Jerdon, the species was collected only twice again till now (Jerdon, 1874; Wroughton 1915), both presumably around the same time in last century, once by Rev. M. Baker and the second time by the better known forester cum botanist Mr. Bourdillon both of whom were Englishmen living in Travancore at the time. The type specimen was lost soon after the species was first described (Wroughton 1915), and the only specimen ever recorded so far to be existing is a mutilated skin in bad condition in the collections of the British Museum of Natural History, London, presumably the one collected by Bourdillon.

The specimen, a female, now obtained almost a century afterwards, was collected from within the crown of a coconut palm at a place called Vennikkulam in Pathanamthitta district of Central Travancore in Kerala, in connection with the programme of district faunistic surveys.

Vennikkulam is a river side village in the countryside on the banks of Manimala river with a small trading center. Nearest-forested area is about 24 km. away to the east in the Ranni Forest division. The area is cultivated with coconut, arecanut, sugar cane, paddy, and of late, cocoa also. It has also some riverine vegetation thick at places along the banks of the river. The plot of land from which the squirrel was collected had all these vegetation types, particularly an isolated cultivation of cocoa plants. Though the area was further explored, especially the crown of all the coconut palms in the area, no other individual was seen. However, the area remains to be explored further with some intensive surveys in the nearby Ranni division of forests.

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