

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

1. GREY MUSK SHREW (*SUNCUS MURINUS*) FEEDING ON TOAD

In December, during a visit to the Lonar crater, near Mehekar in Buldana district, Maharashtra, I heard the familiar squeak of the Grey Musk Shrew (*Suncus murinus*) at night. I located it and to my amazement, saw it had caught a big live toad (*Bufo* sp.) and was dragging it towards a hole. It finally managed to drag the toad into the hole.

About 15-20 days later, in Pune, I started finding live helpless Common Toads in my house. Their thigh muscles had been eaten up, and the bones exposed. The toads were, however, still alive. I was desperately trying to find out what was going on, and one night I did. It was again a Grey Musk Shrew.

I actually saw it chasing a toad, which it grabbed with its sharp teeth, and completely chewed and ate the flesh of the thighs upto the bones and then left the toad which was still alive.

Are the parotoid glands ineffective as a defence against shrews? And why did the shrews leave the toads without eating them completely? I have not seen this occurrence since that day.

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2. ON THE OCCURRENCE OF THE INDIAN TREE SHREW (*ANATHANA ELLIOTI*) IN THE GARHWA FOREST, BIHAR

In the summer of 1994 during an inspection of forests of Ranka range, in Garhwa forest, in south-west Bihar, I saw an animal, which was almost like a squirrel but without the stripes.

The area where this animal was found lies in the newly created Garhwa district, carved out of the old Palamau district. The southeastern part of the Garhwa district forms a part of the Palamau Tiger Reserve. The forests of Garhwa where the animal was seen is of Type II, Group 5D/SI or Northern dry tropical forests according to Champion and Seth's classification.

The villages, where I have spotted this animal are Serasham, Hurdag, in Ranka block and village Ramgarh in Chainpur Block. After the winter of 1994, when vegetation in Ranka Range forest started getting dry, I could sight this animal a number of times. Some villagers also confirmed the description of the animal, and said that they called it "Ban rukhi" which means "Wild Squirrel."

One specimen was caught in April 1995. By appearance it resembled a five-striped ground squirrel, except for its uniform brown (rat like)

colour. Its dentition was also quite different, which distinguished it from the rodent. It was identified as the tree shrew.

The specimen caught measured 20 cm. in body length, and tail was 18 cm.

Brander (1923) states that the Madras Tree shrew (*Tupaia ellioti*) was found throughout the Central Province (presently parts of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra) that included Surguja district, in Madhya Pradesh that adjoins Garhwa.

There is no mention of this species in the working plan (1974-2004) of Garhwa South Forest Division. The working plan of 1964-74 mentions the grey musk shrew (*Suncus murinus*). However, D.G.E. Sanders' final report on the survey and settlement of the Palamau in 1898 reported an animal similar to the Madras Tree Shrew.

The discovery of *Anathana ellioti* confirms the occurrence of this species in south-west Bihar.

June 10, 1996 H.S. GUPTA
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