Newsletter of the Rodentia, Insectivora, Lagomorpha & Scandentia Conservation & Information Network of South Asia -- RILSCINSA

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Dear RILSCINSA Members :

Since our last issue in May 2005 we have

-- brought out the Report of the 600-page NVSM CAMP workshop in June 2005 which has received much praise

-- conducted a field techniques training workshop in 29 October - 03 November 2005 for small mammals in Sri Lanka

-- put together a Summary of the NVSM CAMP Report that will be published at any time now.

-- distributed 3000 educational packets on NVSMs to educators who wished to teach groups of youngsters about small mammals

-- investigating the possibility of Nepal for a field techniques training in the coming year

Things we have not done are :

-- work on the NVSM Action Plan for South Asia (no interest from our ranks !)

-- added field data to the CAMP database (again, no interest from our members),

-- organised the Indian training workshops at colleges that we committed to (no requests forthcoming)

All in all, we are active but not nearly as active as we think we should be. We welcome suggestions from our members and readers for projects which we could do or plan which would assist our rodent biologists to help conserve NVSM's.

Sujit Chakraborty, Scientific Chair
Sally Walker, Convenor, Administrator, Editor

Letter from the Chair of the erstwhile IUCN SSC Rodent Specialist Group

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October, 3, 2005

Dear Dr Sally Walker,

the new Chair of IUCN/SSC, Dr Holly Dublin, informed me that in the framework of re-structuring process some of the SSC Specialist Groups are to be dissolved and the Rodent Specialist Group is one of these. In its place, a Small Non-Volant Mammal Red Listing Authority is to be formed to assess the Red List status of rodents (except those from Australia and New Guinea), insectivores and New World marsupials until after the completion of the Global Mammal Assessment. I was asked to be the focal person of the Small Non-Volant Mammal RLA.

I would like to thank you for the important contribution you made during your time as regional coordinator of the Rodent SG. I kindly request you to write to the members of your region to thank them for their service and inform them about this new scenario.

I am sure we will have other chances to work together on rodent issues.

Giovanni Amori

Courting and Mating in Indian Crested Porcupine, *Hystris indica* Kerr

A.C. Girish, N.E. Thyagaraj and A.K. Chakravarthy*

Indian crested porcupine, *Hystrix indica* Kerr, Hystricidae; Rodentia is a nocturnal animal (Prater, 1980) and distinguishing features for sex identification under field or caged conditions is not readily discernable. In males, the penis is restricted into a cloaca-like structure by muscles attached to a tiny bone inside the penis. In females, a membrane covers the vaginal opening for protection against bark scrapings and debris while climbing. These characteristics make it difficult to distinguish males from females by casual observation (Dodge, 1982). Further, information on courtship behaviour and mating in Indian crested procupine is meagre (Alkon, 1983; Keith & Cary, 1991; Agarwal & Chakraborthy, 1992)

In Sri Chamarajendra Zoological Garden, Mysore (12^{0}20′N, 76^0 5′E) and in State Museum & Zoo, Thrissur (9^{0}20′N, 77^{0}8′ E) with the help of the zoo staff the caged porcupines were observed in an open diamond mesh enclosure extending to about 0.5 acres at each zoo. The movement, postures and behaviour of the animals were recorded during courtship and morphological features of the individuals were recorded through a pair 8x30" Binoculars from outside the enclosure. The frequency of each activity in a set time interval was recorded.

At Antharsanthe range of Nagarhole National Park (11^{0}45′N, 76^{0}5′E-12^{0}15′N, 76^{0}25′E), Mysore, surveys were conducted with forest guards and tribals who were well-versed with behaviour and ecology of porcupines. Animals were sighted during night by wearing headlights. The morphological features and behaviour were recorded. Similar exercise was carried out in Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary, Chikmagalur (13^0 56′N, 75^{0}31′E). All observations were recorded from February 2002 to November 2003.

Courting and Mating:

In Mysore Zoo, on 9th November 2002 at 06.30 p.m. one female was found outside the burrow and after five minutes she was approached by a male porcupine, from inside the cage. The female swiftly responded by moving out from the burrow and initiated courtship by bringing its face near male. Male perceived the body odour of the female touching palms and other body parts. The animals resorted to urinating during courtship and mating events. This exchange lasted for about five minutes and then they set out together for foraging. The animals roamed about extensively, smelling and licking the sides of the cage, frequently.

In Thrissur Zoo, the male procupine was observed allopreening the female on the face, mouth and other body portions. During preening the male shook its body sidewards, contracted and expanded spines and also shook the tail. During passing of urine the porcupines lower their body and shake the tail up and down. They frequently resort to urinating during courtship and mating events. The animal would frequently move inside the cage, rubbing body parts with or licking sides of the cage. Male and female remained together. Male and female also indulged in "stick riding" and turn violent and aggressive with individuals of their own sex (Shadle, 1946). On the sixth day, the male mounted on female and mating attempts frequently took place until coition occurred. If females are also ready for mating, she would face the male, belly to belly and the male would spray her with a strong steam of urine (Shadle, 1946; Shadle *et al.,* 1946). Cooper (2002) from Australia described the process in detail. The animals during mating produced grunting sounds, were exited, restless and exhibit aggressive postures. The frequency of different events is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency of events during courting and mating**

Behavioural trait	Mysore zoo (June to Nov) (25MD)	Thrissur zoo (June to Nov) (8MD)
1. Perceiving body odour	130	46
2. Preening	150	54
3. Urinating	68	21
4. Courting and mating (postures)	55	14

** based on a pair of porcupines in each zoo; one man day (MD)=15 hr.

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Occurrence of the Common Giant Flying Squirrel (*Petaurista petaurista*) in Srawasti Forest Division, Uttar Pradesh

Devendra Kumar*

The Common Giant Flying Squirrel in Srawasti Forest Division was sighted for the first time in 1997 by Sri Tung Nath Tiwari, Deputy Ranger while marking the trees for felling. Before 1997 there is no record of its occurrence in this area

After 1997 the Giant Flying Squirrel (*Petaurista petaurista*) was repeatedly seen in the Bhinga and Kakardari forest ranges of this forest division, by many of our forest officials.

Since March 2003, I have sighted this animal frequently in the forest blocks of - Bhinga 1, Bhinga 5, Bhinga 27, Bhinga 29, Bhinga 32, and Bhinga 45 covering an area of 2375.10 hectares.

This area is not a normal range distribution of common Giant Flying Squirrel (*Petaurista petaurista*) according to Prater (1997). The area bears dry sal forest. The main species being *Shorea robusta*, *Syzygium cuminii*, *Dalbergia sissoo*, *Acacia catechu* etc. The vast tract of Sal and Jamun trees are present in the area. Even a good number of hollow trees and shade bearing trees like *Ficus religiosa*, *Ficus glomerata*, *Ficus bengalensis* and *Adina cordifolia* trees are well distributed over the entire area. Studies are going on to determine its distribution limits it Uttar Pradesh.

Acknowlodgements
The author is grateful to Mr M. Zafar Varasi, President, Paryavarna Jeev Seva Sansthan, Gonda for providing help during survey.

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The Conservation Assessment and Management Plan (CAMP) workshop report for non-volant small mammals is published as a 618 page book called Status of South Asian Non-volant Small Mammals. The book is a compilation of the current taxonomy, distribution and status of 186 species of small mammals in the region based on literature and research by most of the experts on this group from the region and abroad. The Global Mammal Assessment (GMA) was also present at the CAMP and the information was taken by the group along with detailed distribution maps on ArcInfo. Sanjay Molur recently spent 4 days at the GMA office in Virginia University and ensured consistency in the data between the CAMP and GMA databases and worked on refining the maps based on the information provided at the 2003 Coimbatore workshop. The information between the GMA and CAMP may only differ in those taxa that have been recently resurrected or validated in the latest edition of Wilson & Reeder's Mammals of the World, 2005 edition.

A note on the breeding of Indian Gerbil (*Tatera indica* Hardwicki) in captivity

A. Manimozhi*

Introduction:
Rats, mice, volves, gerbils, hamsters and others, about 400 species occur in all habitats, from desert to humid forests. These undistinguished but abundant little rodents are of immense importance as the primary consumers in the range and occupy a basic position in a number of food chains (Whitefied, 1998). The Indian Gerbil (*Tatera indica*) is found throughout India from Himalayas to Cape comorin (Prater, 1971). The Gerbil is at once distinguished from a rat by its tail. It is not bare or naked, but clothed with hair and usually ends in a tassel. Also the hind feet of Gerbil are very long much longer than those of any rat of equal size. Its colour ranges from reddish brown to fawn or grayish fawn. The research studies on the species is very limited. Few field studies on the species are available (Rana *et al.,* 1970; Chakraborty & Ghosal, 1971; Prakash *et al.,* 1974; Chakraborty *et al*., 1981; Bhadauria & Mathur, 1994). No report on Gerbil breeding is available in captivity. This paper is attempted to share the experience gained in breeding and rearing of Gerbil in Arignar Anna Zoological Park.

Materials and Methods:
Arignar Anna Zoological Park collects rats and mice from the Irulas and feed different types of snakes both venomous and non-venomous in order to maintain and keep in captivity. After a decade, the zoo authority thought of breeding white rats and mice for feeding the snakes. When it was in process two pairs of gerbil were collected from the Irulas and included in the breeding programme.

Housing and Maintenance:
The two pairs of Gerbil were housed in 43 x 27 x 14 cm autoclavable standard plastic laboratory tanks on 25th June 1999. This breeding box was placed in a four storey rack along with white rats and mice. Diet, maintenance and management of Gerbil was adapted from Venkataraman *et al*., (2000). Paddy husks are being used as bedding and nesting material. A visual check is made on the condition of the animal and stage of growth of the pups daily.

Observation and Results:
The two pairs of Gerbils are kept separately in two different rat breeding box. Initially they were fed with groundnut, rice, carrot etc., then slowly rat pellet was introduced. Finally, the animals got accustomed to rat pellets. Nearly after 21 months, on 13th March 2001 in one of the box of Gerbil contained 4 pinky coloured pups. The pups were small reddish, helpless and eyes unopened. Day by day colour changes were noticed in the pups. On 22nd March the male partner was removed and kept separately. Two weeks after the pups were handled to weigh to know the growth pattern. The results are depicted in the Table-1. Whenever the pups were handled for weighing high aggressive behaviour was noticed in the mother. The first weight was taken on 30th March 2001. The mean weight of pups were 18.75 gms. Every week an increased weight was observed. Interestingly on 5th and 9th week the mean weight of the pups were 25.83 gms and 16.67 gm respectively. It was quite higher than the other weeks. The same pair bred again and gave single pup, on 27th July 2001. After that, no births were noticed till now.

Discussion:
As far as breeding gerbil (*Tatera indica*) is concerned no reports are available except Prater, (1971). The usual number of young produced at a birth is said to be four. In the present two observation revealed four and one pups in each birth respectively. They breed throughout the year with two peak birth season in February and July (Prater, 1971).

In the present case, the birth was observed in March and July. More studies required to confirm above finding.

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Table-1: Mean increased weight of Indian Gerbil in a week

Sl.no	Date of weighing	Mean weight in gms (n=4)	Weight increase in gms (n=4)
1	20.03.2001	Not taken	
2	27.03.2001	Not taken	
3	30.03.2001	18.75	
4	07.04.2001	23.50	4.75
5	15.04.2001	49.33	25.83
6	23.04.2001	58.67	9.34
7	30.04.2001	67.33	8.66
8	06.05.2001	77.33	18.67
9	15.05.2001	94.00	16.67

Indian Gerbil

Diurnal feeding behaviour of Lesser Bandicoot Rat *Bandicota bengalensis*

Satish Kumar Sharma*

The Lesser Bandicoot Rat *Bandicota bengalensis* is becoming common in Rajasthan. This species is a common pest in all five zoos of Rajasthan, namely Jaipur, Udaipur, Kota, Jodhpur and Bikaner. Its presence can be seen in stores, aviaries, ungulate enclosure, lawns, hedges etc. Like other rodents, namely *Rattus rattus, Mus musculus* and *Funambulus pennanti,* it is a serious zoo-pest and run their lives as a commensal with zoo inmates. Though *Tatera indica* and *Meriones hurriane* are also present in few zoos they don't compete with zoo animals for food.

Lesser Bandicoot Rat *B. bengalensis* is considered one of the nocturnal rodents (Prakash, 1994; Robert, 1997) but it has changed its behaviour in zoos. This rodent can be seen feeding even during day time on grains, offered to zoo animals at Udaipur, Jaipur and Jodhpur Zoos. It feeds on a *pucca* platform during day time in Udaipur Zoo aviary with diurnal Five-striped Plam Squirrel *Funambulus pennanti* without any hesitation. When observed even at close quarters, it shows little shyness. During its endeavour, it comes out from its hole, have a scanning view of the area, quickly proceeds forward towards platform where grains are sprinkled for animals, collets grains in mouth and rushes towards hole. This is its common method for collecting the grains. If no one is present nearby, it spends more time on platform. Diurnal feeding is also common in bandicoots of Jodhpur Zoo.

Perhaps this change in behaviour is due to availability of food during day time. Food, provided to zoo animals in morning is generally consumed and little is left by evening. Even sometimes nothing is left for night. Perhaps to cash in on the opportunity, zoo bandicoots have changed their behaviour and adopted a diurnal mode of life. Since zoo bandicoots are quite safe form raptors, possibly this may also motive them to venture for feeding during day time.

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Author is very grateful to Dr. Pratap Singh, Lecturer, Govt. Dungar College, Bikaner for confirming identification of Lesser Bandicoot Rat.

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Report on the training in Field techniques for the study of Volant and Non-volant small mammals, Randenigala, Sri Lanka, 29th October to 3rd November, 2005

Wipula B. Yapa[1], Sampath Goonathilake[2], P.O. Nameer[3], R. Marimuthu[4] and B.A. Daniel[5]

This Report has been published in full in ZOOS' PRINT and in BAT NET. Therefore this version will focus primarily on the teaching of Non-volant Small Mammal techniques - Editor.

Background

In continuation of the capacity building exercises to ensure that there will be sufficient scientifically trained manpower in the South Asian region to carryout the uphill task of documentation, monitoring and conservation of small mammals of the region, the Chiroptera Conservation Information Network of South Asia (CCINSA) and Rodent, Insectivore, Lagomorph and Scandent Conservation Information Network of South Asia (RILSCINSA) organised a training workshop in the "Field techniques for the study of Volant and Non-volant small mammals" at Randenigala, Sri Lanka from 29th October to 3rd November 2005. This one was the 8th in the series. Before this we have had three in India, three in Pakistan and one in Bangladesh. These have been jointly sponsored by Chester Zoo (sponsor of the Chiroptera Network of South Asia) Knowsley Safari (sponsor of the rodent & insectivore network of S. Asia), and Bat Conservation International (sponsor of several education and training events).

The programme was held at Training, Research, Education and Extension (TREE) Centre, Randenigala, Sri Lanka and was jointly organised by the Zoo Outreach Organisation, India, CBSG, South Asia and the Department of Zoology, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, in collaboration with CCINSA, RILSCINSA and WILD (Wildlife Information Liaison Development Society). The venue of the workshop was an excellent setting at the TREE Centre in Randenigala, which in turn is located in one of the protected areas of Sri Lanka, viz. 'Victoria-Randenigala-Rantambe wildlife sanctuary, which incidentally is the largest protected area in Sri Lanka. The habitat of the area is predominantly scrub jungle to dry deciduous forests. The programme was sponsored by Chester Zoo, U.K., Bat Conservation International, U.S.A., Knowsley Safari Park, U.K. Dr. Mike Jordan, Curator of Higher Vertebrates, Chester Zoo and Dr. Paul Racey, Regius Professor, University of Aberdeen, U.K. were the main resource persons of the workshop.

All the participants and resource persons arrived at the venue on 29th October 2005 evening by 7 P.M. And straight away we commenced the session with a brief inaugural. Dr. Wipula Yapa, Senior Lecturer of University of Colombo, welcomed the participants and the resource persons, Dr. B.A. Daniel, introduced the resource persons and participants.

Day 1: The technical session began with the lecture by Mike Jordan, who introduced the biodiversity of the non-volant small mammals of the orders Rodentia, Insectivora, Lagomorpha and Scandentia. He stressed upon the disparity and the neglect that is being received by the small mammals, in spite of the fact that they account for about 55% of the mammals of the world. The rodents are generally considered as pests, this is in spite of the fact that only 10 to 15 species (<1%) are major pests. However, many of them are threatened with extinction. The diversity among the rodent group was well explained through slides by giving examples from Muridae, Sciuridae, Acomidae, Heteromyedae, Dipododae, Geomydae, Castomydae and Hystricidae; the insectivores families such as Soricidae, Erinaceidae, Talpidae, Tenrecidae and Chrysocholidae.

This was followed by Mike's second presentation on the different types of traps used for the study of the rodents. He explained about the live and single capture traps such as Sherman traps of varying dimensions, Big Wire mesh traps (also known as FAWS TRAP- Forest And Wildlife Service Trap) etc. He also explained about the multi-capture traps such as UGLAN trap. The small mammals, being nocturnal, small and cryptic can only be studied by trapping. The number of traps requires for the study of the small mammals, place top set up the trap and also minor details of successful trapping experiments such as space requirements and time with suitable examples. "one has to think like a small mammal, while setting the traps", Mike says.

Later Mike explained about the handling and welfare issues while studying the small mammals. While handling the animals the primary aim should be "safety to the animals as well as to the person who is handing". Mike told that the advantages of handling the small mammals include species identification, sexing, marking, weighing, determination of the age, breeding condition etc. He also explained how these are done. Different types of marking the small mammals were told.

Field session: He then also demonstrated the preparation of the baits for setting the traps. Afterwards all the participants were taken to a nearby scrub jungle patch for the demonstration of setting the traps. 30 traps were set and another 15 were set near the kitchen/canteen at the base camp.

Day 2: The day started with checking the traps set the previous day. It was a disappointment since most of the traps set were disturbed by the wild Macaques. However, one specimen of *Rattus rattus*

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was caught in one of the traps set on the tree. Mike explained in detail on the problems that the group encountered for a successful trapping. Alternative methods were discussed. He also demonstrated the handling techniques, identification and marking of the species using the trapped specimen before releasing it back in to the wild.

The technical session on the second day started with the presentation of Paul Racey, who gave a vivid introduction of bats, their general features, evolution, taxonomy, distribution, feeding ecology, echolocation and conservation of bats.

He then discussed about the survey techniques and study of bats. He stressed the need for the survey of the bats of the tropics, particularly South Asia, as there is very little information available on the bats of the region. Different types of nets to survey bats such as mist nets, harp nets, canopy nets, bat detectors, flick net etc were explained. So as to collect the bats at roost large butterfly nets can even be used. Paul also explained about the foraging strategy of different species/family of bats.

Day 3: Field session: The day started with checking the traps. One *Rattus rattus* was caught from the natural forest patch and a *Mus booduga* was caught near the auditorium of TREE centre. The latter was caught in multiple capture trap, which actually is quite good for small body sized animals. Mike demonstrated the handling, weighing, sexing, measuring, photographing and finally released the animals. In the afternoon session of the trap checking a *Funambulus palmarum* was caught, the same was also processed and released.

Nameer Ommer demonstrated the dry skin preservation techniques (carding) and preparation of the skull for storage in the museum. Voucher specimens are of extreme importance in the study of small mammals. It helps us to sort out taxonomical issues such as the identity of the species. Some of the advantages of the carding, when compared to that of wet preservation are a). it helps to retain the original colour and the shape of the animal for a longer period of time, to a great extend. b) it help us save considerable space in the lab or museum. Moreover, it is also a very simple technique that can be done right in the middle of the forest/field station. All that what is required is only a pair of scissors and borax powder.

Day 4: Field session: The day started with checking the Sherman traps. One *Rattus rattus*, *Mus booduga* and a shrew *Suncus murinus kandyan* were caught. The handling and processing of the animals were demonstrated by Mike.

This was followed by a panel discussion on survey protocols of Volant and non-volant small mammals. The discussion was led by Paul Racey and Mike Jordan, during the course of which they answered different field related questions of the participants. Mike Jordan illustrated about the importance of small mammal conservation with several examples. He explained about the threats to the small mammals such as habitat loss, introduction of alien and invasive species, predation, disease, habitat destruction, habitat degradation, all of which lead to habitat fragmentation. Defragmenting the population using decolonisation and reintroduction is a way out for the conservation of the small mammals under severe threat. Mike also told that out of the 83 species of mammals that were gone extinct over the past 500 years, 75% are small mammals.

Wipula Bandara Yapa made presentation on an "introduction to Sri Lankan Mammals" with particular emphasis on small mammals. This was followed by a presentation by Nameer Ommer on the CAMP process and the results of the CAMP on small mammals conducted by ZOO/CBSG South Asia on small mammals during 2002 and 2004 on Volant and non-volant small mammals respectively.

Day 5: B.A. Daniel explained about the various Education activities of Zoo Outreach Organisation, particularly those related with small mammals.

Mike, Paul and Nameer then led a discussion on conservation recommendation of small mammals drawing examples from the IUCN Red list categories of small mammals of Sri Lanka. They pointed out the lack of our knowledge about the known species of small mammals of Sri Lanka and warrant more studies on them, one of the main reasons for the conduct of this training workshop here at Sri Lanka is to equip the young researchers to take up this challenge.

This was followed by a discussion on sources of funding for studies on small mammals, which was led by Paul and Mike. They have given the details including the web site address of various funding agencies that would be interested in funding on studies of small mammals.

During the valedictory function all the participants were asked to give commitment to take up some activities towards conservation of bats and rodents. All participants received a certificate of appreciation and a CD containing all presentations of the resource persons and related literature. Dr. Wipula Yapa thanked all the participants for their interest shown in attending the workshop. He also thanked the Zoo Outreach Organisation, particularly Sally Walker for the visionary zeal of organising this kind of training workshop in different regions of South Asia, which would definitely have a long standing impact on the conservation of small mammals of the region in the years to come. Yapa also thanked the resource persons for their time and effort to go over to Sri Lanka to train the young biologists of the country. The sponsors, e.g. Chester Zoo, Knowsley Safari and Bat Conservation International, were duly acknowledged with a round of applause.

Vertebrate Pests in Agriculture - The Indian Scenario -

Shakunthala Sridhara (Editor) ISBN: 81-7233-436-2, 2006, 605 pages
Price: Rs. 1950 US$ 90.00

Vertebrate pests cause considerable damage to environment, agriculture and biodiversity apart from transmitting diseases. The problem is more pronounced in tropical Asia and Africa with nonhuman primates, elephants, several species of ungulates, rodents, frugivorous and grainivorous birds causing agricultural losses. In Europe and America the damage is due to carnivore predation on livestock, bird damage in cereal crops and rodent problem in urban and agricultural situations. Although there are several excellent books on rodent pest management both in India and at global level, there is a conspicuous lacuna of published books on vertebrate pest management. Even the few publications on the subject mostly deal with birds, rodents, bears, rabbits, foxes etc because they are written by Americans or Britishers. Because their emphasis is on the problem prevalent in their countries and evaluation of management options available to them.

In contrast the problem in tropics especially in India is unique. Rodents of course, are the most destructive. But what rodents do over twelve months of year is matched by a few nights of devastating crop raids by elephants or week long foraging by monkeys. Sporadic and localized damage is inflicted by several species of birds, bats, wild boar, blue bull, bears, hares, peacock etc. The damage is sometimes so high, it is impossible for a subsistence farmer to accept stoically the loss of his entire food source over a couple of days and nights. However, his options are limited in view of conservations and protection status enjoyed by some of these animals. The problem is compounded by religious sentiments associated with a few of them. This book is an attempt to find an acceptable solution to the problem of crop losses of these less studied but economically important groups of vertebrate pests. Sincere efforts have gone into formulation of recommendations keeping in mind the biological needs of vertebrate pests, their conservation status and suffering of the poor farmer. Many a time the sympathies deservedly go to the speechless marauders of crops as it is man who has shrunk, degraded and destroyed their habitat, deprived them of their natural source of food. There are no choices for vertebrate pests but raid the crops in their range but we, humans have several to survive. The book is an attempt to understand this dilemma.

The Editor

Dr. SHAKUNTHALA SRIDHARA after obtaining her Ph.D in Animal Physiology from Bangalore University joined a Ford Foundation Project on vertebrate pest management in the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, India in 1973. Over the past 33 years she has been researching on vertebrate pest management specially the control of rodents in the agricultural context. She has researched extensively on the ecology, population dynamics, food selection and feeding behaviour of rodents, toxicology of rodenticides and adoption of rodent pest management at village level. Her studies on behaviour relevant to management of avian and mammalian pests are pioneering in the Indian context and well acknowledged culminating in adaptable technologies for their management. She has visited and interacted with specialists in the field across America and Europe several times. Keenly interested in animal behaviour studies and its application in pest and wildlife management, biodiversity conservation and animal produce, she is member of several national and international scientific bodies including the presidentship of Ethological Society of India, Indian representative in the International Council of Ethologists, IUCN species specialist group on rodents etc. At present she is Professor and Head of Vertebrate Biology (Rodent Control) in the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore.

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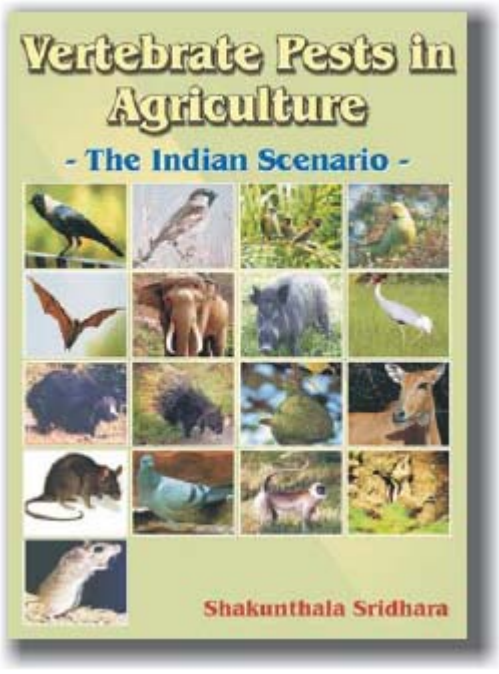


RILSCINSA – Rodentia, Insectivora, Lagomorpha and Scandentia

Conservation & Information Network of South Asia

c/o Z.O.O, 29/1, Bharati Colony, Peelamedu, Coimbatore 4, TN India
Phone: 0091 422 2561087; Fax : 2563269; email: zooreach@zooreach.org, zoocrew@vsnl.net
Websites: www.zooreach.org & www.zoosprint.org *(search RILSCINSA, rodent, etc.)*

Invitation 2006

To: Non-volant Small Mammal Specialists of South Asia

Fm: Dr. Sujit Chakraborty, Scientific Chair & Sally Walker, Convenor & Admin - Chair

Ref: Membership in RILSCINSA

Dear Colleague,

This letter is to introduce you to RILSCINSA, the Rodentia, Insectivora, Lagomorpha, Scandentia Conservation & Information Network of South Asia. This network was suggested by interested biodiversity conservation specialists and is being implemented by a group of small organizations and networks based in India but covering all the countries of South Asia including Afghanistan.

RILSCINSA represents the relevant specialist groups of IUCN SSC by forwarding the names of specialists, information which may be of interest to IUCN, organizing workshops with SG Chairs as participants and resource persons, etc.

Background
The inspiration for this network has its roots in the Conservation Assessment and Management Plan (C.A.M.P.) Workshop for Indian Mammals which was conducted in 1997 by Zoo Outreach Organisation. During this workshop field biologists assessed the threat status of more than 400 species of Indian mammals (118 of which from the orders Rodentia, Insectivora, Lagomorpha and Scandentia) using IUCN Red List Criteria, 1994. The output of these assessment for rodents included many Data Deficient species and indicated that much work had to be done. We formed this network on that basis and held another workshop in 2004. The Report of that workshop is released but there are far fewer Data Deficient species due to the networking of specialists.

The purpose of this network, then, is to link together rodent field researchers and their field knowledge throughout South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan) so the pooling of information can lead to conservation action. Some things RILSCINSA is doing are listed below:

Objectives
i) encourage and promote the study of non-volant (non-flying) small mammals (rodents, insectivores, tree shrews, lagomorphs, etc,) by organizing and running a network of all specialists, providing them useful services.

ii) maintain a checklist and database — as complete and correct as possible — of rodents and insectivores of South Asia providing local, national and regional information to be shared with important national and international agencies and organisations;

iii) catalyse, organize, conduct and follow-up conservation assessment and other workshops and training exercises for rodent specialists of South Asia and public education projects as appropriate, nationally or regionally;

iv) follow up such workshops with recommendations to local, state, national and regional wildlife authorities for protection for threatened species of rodents, etc. and promotion of further studies of Data Deficient species;

v) undertake a set of specific "tasks" utilising the information from the workshops to further enhance our knowledge of non-volant small mammal status in South Asia

vi) research and disseminate information about funding sources for field surveys

vii) bring out a newsletter of current non-volant mammals conservation, research, education news (several issues have been brought out and can be found on our website http://www.zoosprint.org)

viii) prepare a Directory of rodent and insectivore specialists of South Asia for distribution to all network members; (the second edition of this directory released and can be found on our web site http://www.zooreach.org)

ix) prepare educational at different levels on rodents, etc. for conveying to policy makers, politicians, and the public – all ages and languages. Much material is on hand with us.

x) Involve researchers in public education on rodents by providing printed material, and guidelines. This is going on throughout South Asia now. Even very high-level researchers organise programmes for school kids.

We would like to enlist every small mammal field researcher in South Asia to the extent possible. To become a member of RILSCINSA, send your biodata via email to <zoocrew@vsnl.net> along with your request. We will email you a form to fill out for membership and for inclusion in the Directory. In the form we would like you to fill out with information about yourself and your work so that other researchers can get in touch with you if they have information to share or to obtain and vice versa. There is also a form for you to suggest field biologists and other rodent and insectivore scientists to be contacted for the Network. On return of the filled-in form we will add you to our email list which will provide you with occasional messages including an information packet on the network, IUCN Red List Guidelines, Newsletter, educational material, etc.

Although this is a conservation network, we welcome members working in pest control research as well because they will have information to contribute despite the difference in orientation. We also welcome educators with a particular interest in small mammals and public education as we can share material with them and assist small mammal conservation by making the public more informed.

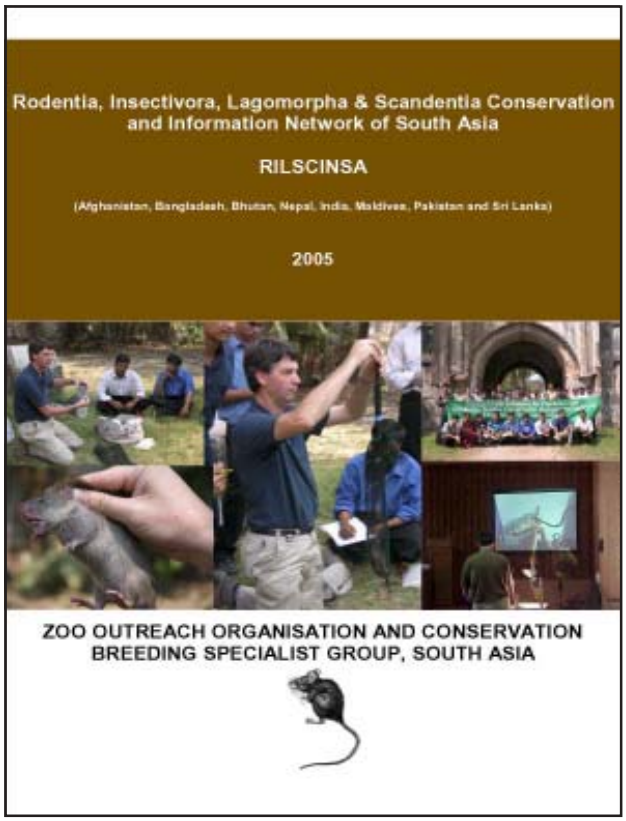
The role of Zoo Outreach Organisation which runs this network is administrative and coordinating. We take on this task of administration and coordination so that researchers and scientists who do not have time or (often) infrastructure for this type of work can be free for their field studies.

We look forward to interacting with you and increasing our communication with small mammal researchers of this region. We are targeting very specific informational products which will be of help to all conservation workers in monitoring, protecting, and conserving these species for the future. We welcome you to this initiative.

Best wishes from RILSCINSA

Sujit Chakraborty, Chair
Sally Walker, Convenor and Administrator

RILSCINSA Member Directory -- check out your entry on the web www.zooreach.org

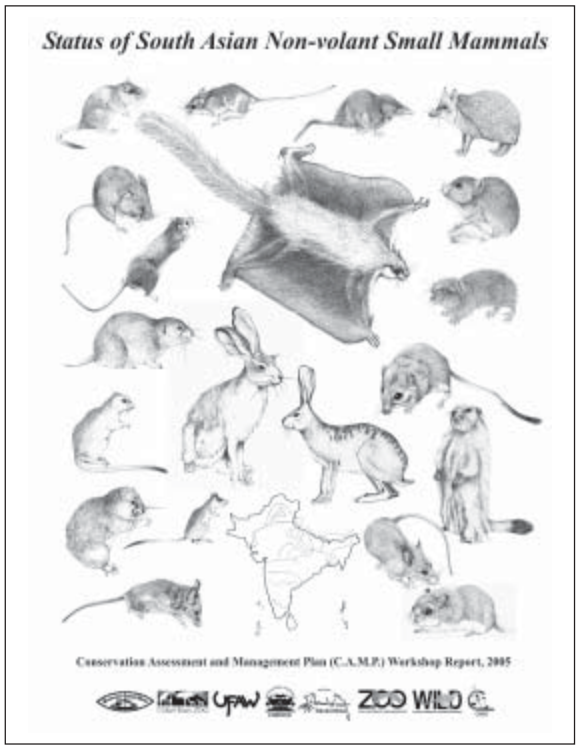


The RILSCINSA Directory has been up on the website <www.zooreach.org> since May of 2005. Since that time most of you would have completed new studies, acquired new interests, email addresses, etc. and may like to update your information.

The Directory begins with a country-wise name list, so that you can see in a moment who is listed and the next section is essential data of our members which includes name, address, phone, etc., Qualification or Title, Research or Study Interest, Species specialty, Projects, Captive animals maintained, publications and date joined RILSCINSA. A list of Publications of RILSCINSA members follows with emphasis on conservation-oriented publications. These publications are listed first author wise and then subject-wise, e.g. Taxonomy, Ecology, Behaviour, Methodology, Zoo captive, Management, General. Finally there are Projects of RILSCINSA members also listed country -wise. Finally there is a list of the email ID's of RILSCINSA members.

If you have not filled out your data form, please do so and send to zoocrew@vsnl.net.

Status of South Asian Non-volant Small Mammals Conservation Assessment and Management Plan (C.A.M.P.) Workshop Report, 2005



A4 size, 618 pages contains in explicit detail the distribution, threats and represents the most current information about South Asian Rodents and Insectivores with distribution maps and an impressive array of black/ white line drawings

Indians: Rs. 1000 (including postage)
Foreigners: $ 50 (including postage)

Scientific chair Sujith Chakraborty
Editor: Sally Walker
Editorial advisors : S. Molur, B.A. Daniel
Publication asst: Latha, Marimuthu

Rat - a - tattle is the occasional Newsletter of the Rodentia, Insectivora, Scandentia and Lagomorpha Conservation & Information Network of South Asia or RISLCINSA. This is Vol.6, No.1, July 2006.

RISLCINSA is for Ratters in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka.

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