



## A note on feeding behaviour of Stripe-necked Mongoose from southern Western Ghats



Stripe-necked Mongoose *Herpestes vitticollis* at Periyar Tiger Reserve. © M.S. Syamili.

The Stripe-necked Mongoose *Herpestes vitticollis* is the largest Asiatic Mongoose (Mudappa 2013). *H.v. vitticollis* is one of the subspecies seen in the Western Ghats of Coorg, Anamalai, and Kerala. It has an orangish-red tint on the body (Gilchrist et al. 2009). It mostly occurs in deciduous (dry & moist) and evergreen forests and prefer habitats near streams and rivers (Menon 2014). It has been reported from Periyar Tiger Reserve, Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Tiger Reserve, Parambikulam Tiger Reserve, Eravikulam National Park, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, and Silent Valley National Park (Ramachandran 1985; Kumara et al. 2014; Sreehari & Nameer 2016; Nikhil & Nameer 2017; Sanghamithra

& Nameer 2018; Sreekumar & Nameer 2018). They are diurnal solitary herpestines and are known to feed on crabs, small mammals, birds, bird eggs, reptiles, and insects (Prater 1971). In Sri Lanka, they are found to hunt small mammals such as Mouse Deer *Moschiola meminna* and Black-naped Hare *Lepus nigricollis*. This mongoose is also found scavenging on Sambar *Rusa unicolor* and Indian Hare *Lepus nigricollis* (Gilchrist et al. 2009). Detailed ecological or behavioural studies on this diurnal mongoose in southern Asia is mostly absent.

On 26 January 2019 at 07.45h, during the course of a bird survey at Periyar Tiger



Reserve (near Manakkavala), we observed an interesting behaviour by a Stripe-necked Mongoose, which was found feeding on invertebrates, including beetles and grubs, from among the fresh dung piles of Asian Elephants. The animal spent 10–15 minutes searching and feeding on invertebrates from the dung piles. The whole episode was video graphed ([Video 1](#)). We noticed the same behaviour the next day too at a different site near Manakkavala.

There is a report on the feeding of the invertebrates from the African Elephant dung by the White-tailed Mongoose *Ichneumia albicauda* in Africa (Gilchrist et al. 2009). This is the first report of such a behaviour in any Indian Mongoose.

The present observation underscores the significance of detailed studies on the biology and ecology of small carnivores, including the mongoose, which in turn will be useful for the long-term conservation of these lesser-known taxa in the biodiversity hotspot, the Western Ghats.

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