



Brown Mongoose in Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve



Brown Mongoose *Herpestes fuscus*.

There have been repeated observations of the Brown Mongoose *Herpestes fuscus* from Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (Maharashtra). These animals with their characteristic very bushy tail have been sighted late in the afternoon as well as during the night. They have been observed to scavenge on road killed insects and frogs. Most of the observations were made on a tarred main road cutting through the southern tropical dry deciduous forest comprising mainly of teak and bamboo. The animals did not appear to be elusive and shy but seemed to be tolerant of the vehicular traffic. The animal sightings (12 different sightings; 4 by the

author) till date have ranged over 15km of erstwhile Chandrapur Nagpur State Highway that passes through Tadoba Forest. The first sighting was close to Padmapur Gate (20.059°N & 79.312°E; elevation 210m) and another sighting was at the forest rest house in Moharli Village (20.189°N & 79.336°E; 221m). Almost all the rest were randomly spread in between. The last sighting was in the core forest, close to the erstwhile Jamni Village (20.364°N & 79.329°E; 265m) almost 45km away by road.

Brown Mongoose has till now been known to occur in southern Western Ghats (over



1,000km away from these mentioned sightings) and Sri Lanka (Mudappa & Jathanna 2015), from 450–2,000 m. It shows distinct preference for evergreen forests. The compiled data for the entire known population showed occurrence in western border of Kodagu (Coorg) District, Virajpet in south Kodagu, and Ooty in the Nilgiri Hills, Tiger Shola in the Palani Hills, the High Wavy Mountains in Theni, Kalakad-Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve in Agasthyamalai Hills, the Valparai Plateau in the Anamalai Hills in Tamil Nadu, and Eravikulam National Park, Parambikulam Tiger Reserve and Peermedu in Kerala (Pocock 1939; Prater 1971; Corbet & Hill 1992; Sreehari et al. 2013; D. Jathanna pers. comm. 2014).

In southern India, Brown Mongoose have been recorded from rubbish dumps, close to human dwellings as well as scavenging on carcasses of large mammals like Gaur *Bos gaurus* in Anamalai (D. Mudappa pers. comm. 2014). It has been believed to be crepuscular and nocturnal in habit, but with day time activity (Mudappa & Jathanna 2015).

Presently, the total Indian population has been recorded only in evergreen forests of southern Western Ghats. However, Sanjay Gubbi's record from B.R. Hills Sanctuary and now Anirudh Chaoji, Shatanik Bhagwat, and Sanjay Thakur's records from Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve call for a better study of this animal. It is surprising that despite extensive camera trapping by various agencies, this animal was missed out. Probably it calls for a different protocol for camera trapping (including on carcasses of tiger and leopard kills).

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