

Survey of Small Mammals of Hingol National Park Balochistan.

Mehrban Ali Brohi and Shamim Fakhri

Zoological Survey Department, Government of Pakistan, Karachi

Abstract

Survey of small mammals of the Hingol National Park was carried out which revealed preponderance of rodents. Presence of one carnivore and one lagomorph species were also observed. Palm squirrel (*Funnambulus pennantii*) and Balochistan gerbil (*Gerbillus nanus*) seems to be dominating species found in the National Park.

Keywords: Hingol National Park, Balochistan, mammals, gerbil, mouse, jird, porcupine, mongoose, hare, squirrel

Introduction

Hingol National Park is situated 250 km northwest of Karachi in Balochistan Province. It spreads over 6,000 square km and spreads in three districts i.e. Lasbella, Gwadar and Awaran. The park is stretched between the coastline on its southern boundary to hilly with valleys and few agricultural fields in the north. In the southern parts of the park there is a desert between coastline and muddy hills.

Hingol National Park has diversified habitat such as coastline, river, estuarine area, riverine flood plain, rocky and muddy hills, valleys, desert with sand dunes and mud volcanoes. The dominant plants species of the area are *Acacia senegal*, *Acacia nilotica*, *Prosopis cineraria*, *Salvadora sp.*, *Ziziphus jujuba*, *Euphorbia*, *Tamarix* spp. Owing to its versatile habitat types the Hingol National park has rich biota. Information on the animals inhabiting in the area is limited. Robert (1997) in his book on Mammals of Pakistan showed distribution of some animals in the National Park area. Azam (2004) studies the avifauna of the Park whereas Javed et al (2005) studied population of marsh crocodile inhabiting the National Park.

Material and Methods

Small mammals were studied from May 31 to June 5, 2006 in the southern parts of the National Park. Areas adjacent to Agor, Nani Mundar, Kund Malir, Nala Jakee (Buzi Pass) and Kashee Goth were surveyed. Trapping was carried out on five nights in different habitats including desert, agricultural land, hills and riverbed using Sherman traps. These traps were baited with peanut butter, and honey. All the trapped animals were identified and released. Each plot was sampled only once in the present study. Captured mammals were identified using Robert (1997, 2005a, 2005b).

Results and discussion

In the present survey a total of 11 species of small mammals were found in the National Park (Table 1). Among the 9 species of rodents, Balochistan gerbil, (*Gerbilus nanus*) seems to be most abundant and most widely distributed in sandy agricultural lands. Palm squirrel (*Funnambulus pennantii*) was found to be most abundant at one particular place as in the Nani Mandhir area 15 specimens were observed. This was followed by Cairo spiny mouse (*Acomys cahirinus*) which was found most common in hilly tracts and crevices. Some other rodents were also sighted like Indian desert jird (*Meriones hurriane*) but could not be trapped in present survey.

Table- I. Small mammals at Hingol National Park

Location	Kund Malir N 25° 20' E 65° 26'	Nani Bent N 25° 31' E 65° 31'	Nani Maudhir N 25° 30' E 65° 32'	Nala Jakee (Buzi Pass) N 25° 28' E 65° 14'	Kashee Goth N 25° 28' E 65° 35'	Agor N 25° 27' E 65° 33'
Habitat	Sandy and rocky stony hill	Agricultural land	rocky stony hill	Mountain and sandy area and slope	Agricultural land, Sandy area, rocky stony area.	Rocky and stony hill area and sandy area
Balochistan Gerbil <i>Gerbillus nanus</i>	4	4		4	2	4
Cairo Spiny Mouse <i>Acomys cahirinus</i>	2			1	1	
House Mouse <i>Mus musculus</i>	1					
Persian Jird <i>Meriones persicus</i>				1		
Palm Squirrel <i>Funnambulus pennantii</i>		2	15			
Indian Gerbil <i>Tetra indica</i>					1	1
Porcupine <i>Hystrix cristatus</i>		Foot prints/ spines		Foot prints/ Spines	Foot prints/ spines	Foot prints/ Spines
Mongoose <i>Herpestes javanicus</i>			2			
Cape Hare <i>Lepus capensis</i>	Droppings	Droppings	Droppings	Foot prints/ Droppings	Foot prints/ Droppings	Droppings
Indian Desert Jird <i>Meriones hurricane</i>			Sighted but could not be caught			
Hedgehog <i>Hemiechinus auritus megalotis</i>					Reported by villagers	

Spines and foot prints of porcupine (*Hystrix cristatus*) were noted but no direct sighting could be made. Hedgehog (*Hemiechinus auritus megalotis*) was also reported

by local villagers of Kashee Goth. Droppings of Cape hare were sighted at many places through out the survey area while no direct sightings occurred during the present survey.

In addition to small mammals, during the survey large mammals including Sindh ibex (*Capra aegagrus blythi*), urial (*Ovis vignei blanfordi*) Asiatic jackal (*Canis aurius*) and desert fox (*Vulpes ruppelli*) were also observed. Among birds, seese partridge (*Ammopraxis griseo gularis*), grey partridge (*Francolinus pondicerianus*), small blue kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), collared dove (*Streptopelia deccota*), little brown dove (*Streptopelia senegalensis*) and blue rock pigeon (*Columbia livia*) were observed. Marsh crocodile (*Crocodylus plaustris*) were observed at in Hingol River at Agor area. During present survey it was observed that the area of Hingol particularly Nani Mandhir is well protected where Sindh ibex roams freely.

Present study reveals that Hingol National Park is rich in small mammal diversity, however, further studies will be required to catalogue all mammals and other fauna found in this important habitat. Balochistan Forest and Wildlife department has already started a programme to study the biodiversity of the Hingol National Park.

References

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