

An observation of Common Palm Civet *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus* mating

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Abstract

Common Palm Civets *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus* are nocturnal animals for which behaviour and ecology are not well documented despite the species's abundance and in some places commensal habits. We present an observation of this civet mating from Assam, India. The sighting occurred in daytime in a tree crown near human habitation.

Keywords: behaviour, commensal, copulation, Kaziranga National Park

শিৰোনামা: ভাৰতবৰ্ষৰ অসমত ক'মন পাম চিভেট (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*) যৌন আচৰণ পৰ্যবেক্ষণ।

সংক্ষিপ্ত বিৱৰণ: ক'মন পাম চিভেট (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*) এবিধ নিশাচৰ জন্তু। যদিও ইহত অতি সহজে উপলব্ধ, নিশাচৰ হোৱাৰ বাবে ইহঁতৰ আচৰণ আৰু পাৰিপাৰ্শ্বিকতা ভালদৰে জানিব পৰা হোৱা নাই। আমি ভাৰতবৰ্ষৰ অসম ৰাজ্যত এইবিধ জন্তুৰ যৌন আচৰণ পৰ্যবেক্ষণ কৰিছিলো। এই সংগম দিনৰ পোৰৰ গছৰ ওপৰত মানুহৰ জনবসতি পূৰ্ণ জেগাত হৈছিল।

মূল শব্দ: আচৰণ, জনবসতি, দিনৰ ভাগত, কাজিৰঙা ৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় উদ্যান।

One of the most widespread species of civets (family Viverridae) found in India and South-east Asia, the Common Palm Civet *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus* occurs commonly in many habitats ranging from the most degraded and isolated human environments to pristine evergreen forests, and in some parts of its range, up to 2,400 m (e.g. Pocock 1939, Duckworth 1997, Azlan 2003, Su Su 2005). Due to their solitary and nocturnal habits, little is known about the reproductive processes and behaviour of civets (Ewer & Wemmer 1974, Prater 1980, Balakrishnan 2002). Although Common Palm Civet is quite common, we traced no documented observations of this species mating, from standard sources in any part of its range. This paper notes a chance observation of it mating near Kaziranga National Park in Assam, India.

The state of Assam is located in northeast India that forms a part of rich bio-geographic unit that represent one of the world's biodiversity hotspots (Myers 1991). The Common Palm Civet is common all over Assam, including within forests and well-wooded villages (Choudhury 1997).

On the overcast, rainy day of 26 March 2010, by the village of Kohora (26°35'9.6"N, 93°24'41.8"E; altitude 70 m), near Kaziranga National Park, at around 16h45, some residents grew excited after seeing two small animals in the crown of a *Syzygium cumini* (Jamun) tree, around 45 m from the nearest building. On close inspection (from about 25 m), we saw that it was a pair of Common Palm Civets attempting to mate. We moved closer, to observe the animals through binoculars. The animals were quite oblivious to such close human presence. Initially the animals were behind the tree branch with lots of leaves allowing only a brief sight. After some time they slightly moved down along the branch giving us a clear view. The pair copulated on the tree branch for about five minutes (Figs. 1–2). During that period the male mounted the female 4–5 times. The female lay down on her abdomen on

the tree branch, arching her back and turning her head frequently towards the male during the course of mating. After each mounting the pair separated for few moments and repeated the same procedure. After completion of mating, the pair frolicked around for some time, moving from branch to branch on the tree. The animals separated after about six minutes and moved off to different branches and rested there (Fig. 3).

The habitat of the area was tropical moist mixed deciduous forests (Champion & Seth 1968), with Jamun, the bamboo *Bambusa bambusa* and Mango *Mangifera indica* being the major species, which mostly were planted by the villagers.

Common Palm Civet is considered a nocturnal animal but the present sighting took place in daylight, in a wet and dim condition. A somewhat similar sighting was reported in Fraser's Hill at Malaysia where two Common Palm Civets were seen copulating in a large (about 10 feet diameter) leafy cluster of lianas 35–45 feet above the ground amid montane forest in daytime between 11h30–13h00 on 21 September 1997; although in relict primary forest, this sighting was also close to habitation, about 50 m from the nearest building (J. W. Duckworth *in litt.* 2011).



Fig. 1. Mating of Common Palm Civet *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus* in the crown of a Jamun *Syzygium cumini* tree; Assam, India, time: 16h51.



Fig. 2. Mating of Common Palm Civet in a *Syzygium cumini* (Jamun) tree; time: 16h52.



Fig. 3. Two Common Palm Civets resting on different branches of the same tree after mating; time: 16h58.

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