

An observation of Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii* mating

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Abstract

Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii* is among the most common small carnivores of the Indian subcontinent, yet its behaviour and ecology are poorly documented. A pair was observed mating, in open scrub, at 07h30 on 24 September 2009. Each of the several copulations took about 30–40 seconds; they were separated by 2–3 minutes.

Keywords: behaviour, copulation duration, copulation style, India, natural history

Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii* is one of the most commonly found mongoose species in the Indian subcontinent, occurring from the Himalayan foothills south to Kanyakumari and Sri Lanka, extending westward to Arabia and east to Assam (Veron *et al.* 2006). Pondicherry is a union territory situated in Tamil Nadu, southern India. Pondicherry University campus is situated 10 km north of Pondicherry town, at 12°00'57"N, 79°51'31"E. Its scrub and woodlands support carnivores such as Common Palm Civet *Paradoxurus hermaph-*

roditus, Grey Mongoose and Golden Jackal *Canis aureus*. Some large birds of prey, such as Indian Eagle Owl *Bubo bengalensis*, exist in the campus. The vegetation is dominated by *Phoenix pusilla*, *Jasminum angustifolium* and *Acacia auriculiformis*, intermixed with plantations of Teak *Tectona grandis* and *Eucalyptus*.

Under slightly overcast conditions at 07h30 on 24 September 2009, we were returning from birding in the campus when, in an area dominated by scrub-like vegetation thick with *Jasminum* bushes, with open canopy dominated by *Acacia*, we saw two Grey Mongooses running one behind the other. From behind a large *Jasminum* about 20–30 m from the pair, we silently observed them. They seemed quite oblivious to our presence. The pair exhibited playful behaviour in which they mock-attacked each other for about 5 minutes, after which they copulated about 2–3 times. During copulation, the female lay on her abdomen (Fig. 1), facing her head forward and looking sidewise, whereas the male apparently concentrated on mating, not looking at the surroundings. Each copulation took about 30–40 seconds. After which the male tried to push the female. They remained parted for about 2–3 minutes, then again the female allowed the male to mount again. This behaviour lasted for about 10–13 mins, after which the pair disappeared into bushes. These observations echo those of captives by Frere (1929), who mentioned that “the act (copulation) was repeated half a dozen or more times at intervals of few minutes on each occasion”. We could not trace any other information on mating in this species. Prater (1971) noted the post-mating behaviour, but did not detail copulation, and Pocock (1941) made reference only to Frere (1929).



Fig. 1. A pair of Grey Mongooses *Herpestes edwardsii* mating in Pondicherry University campus, India, on 24 September 2009.

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