

5. FEEDING ACTIVITY IN THE CAPTIVITY OF THE WESTERN GHATS SQUIRREL *FUNAMBULUS TRISTRIATUS* WATERHOUSE<sup>1</sup>

(With a text-figure)

INTRODUCTION

The Western Ghats squirrel (*Funambulus tristriatus* Waterhouse) is an important rodent pest of cacao (*Theobroma cacao* L.) in south India (Bhat *et al.* 1981). But no effective

succeed the schedule of baiting must coincide with the peaks of feeding of the target animal. In this report the observations made by us on the rhythm of feeding of the Western Ghats squirrel are discussed.

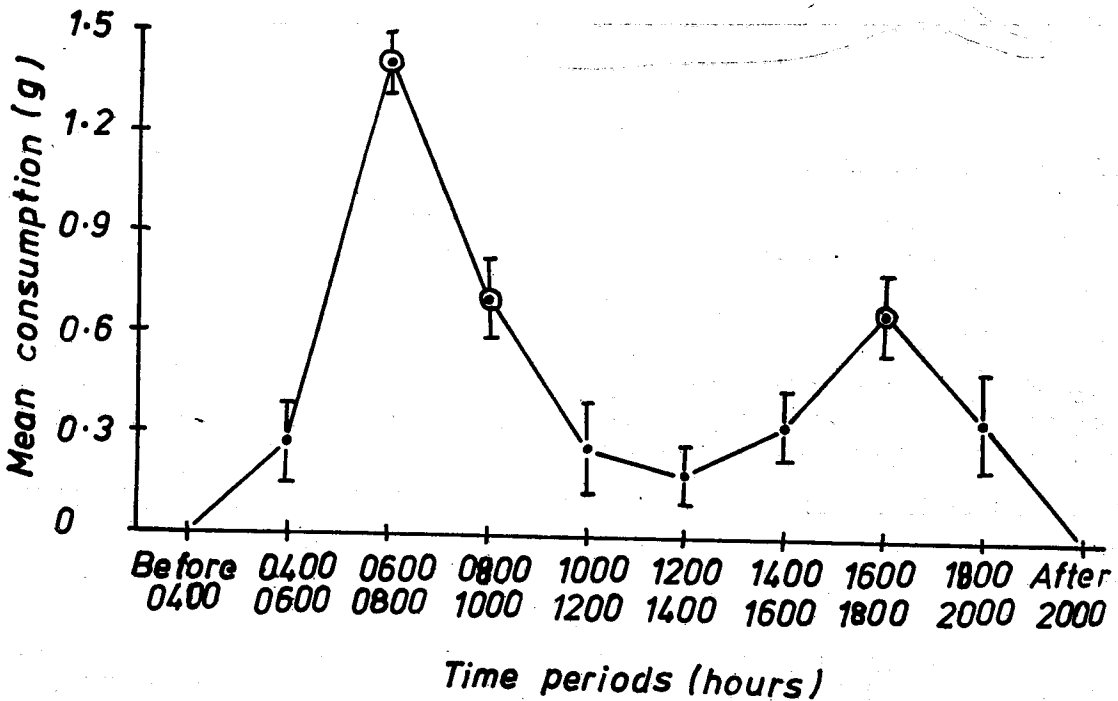


Fig. 1. Feeding pattern of *Funambulus tristriatus*.

method has been evolved so far for its control. Trapping by offering baits is one of the methods usually tried for controlling this squirrel. If this type of control of rodent pests is to

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was undertaken in the laboratory of the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Regional Station, Vittal, Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka under natural daylight in November 1978. Six adult Western Ghats squirrels (3 ♂♂ and 3 ♀♀) of recorded

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body weights were lodged individually in cells of  $50 \times 30 \times 30$  cm. These squirrels were allowed to acclimatise themselves to the conditions in the cage for five days prior to the experiment. On the sixth day each squirrel was provided with weighed quantity of paddy grains, previously air dried to a constant weight. The experiment was continued for 10 days. Each day the consumption of paddy was recorded at two-hourly intervals between 0400 and 2000 h. The weighing was done to the nearest 0.5 g using a common counter balance. Absolute consumption values were transformed to g/100 g body weight of the animal. The average consumption during each period was computed and analysed statistically.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data (see Fig. 1) revealed the presence of distinct bimodal feeding pattern in this squirrel. Feeding was first observed around 0600 h, increasing rapidly thereafter. The over-

all mean consumption per animal per two-hour-period was  $0.54 \pm 0.02$  g. The morning peak in feeding ( $1.44 \pm 0.09$  g) was observed around 0800 h. After 0800 h the feeding activity lessened gradually reaching a minimum ( $0.18 \pm 0.08$  g) at about 1400 h. Feeding activity increased again gradually after 1400 h reaching a peak around 1800 h. Thereafter feeding slowed down and ceased at about 2000 h. Feeding was never observed at night. It is evident from this study that baits for these squirrels are best set up in the early hours of the day.

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S. KESHAVA BHAT<sup>1</sup>  
D. N. MATHEW

DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY,  
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT,  
KERALA-673 635,  
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#### REFERENCE

BHAT, S. K., NAIR, C. P. R. & MATHEW, D. N. (1981): Mammalian pests of cocoa in south India. *Trop. Pest Mgmt.* 27:297-307.

<sup>1</sup> Present Address: Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Reg. Stan., Kayangulam, Kerala-690 533.

#### 6. REPORT ON THE OCCURRENCE OF THE FAWN-COLOURED MOUSE, *MUS CERVICOLOR CERVICOLOR* HODGSON, 1845 [RODENTIA: MURIDAE] IN THE ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS, INDIA

A small collection of rodents obtained by Shri P. K. Das, Zoologist, Zoological Survey of India, from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands included a grey-bellied mouse with