

## Occurrence of Indian Painted Bat (*Kerivoula picta*) in the vicinity of Masinagudi range, Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Southern India

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### Abstract

The occurrence of Indian Painted Bat *Kerivoula picta* in the Masinagudi range, Mudumalai Tiger Reserve was studied. The morphometric measurement of the species revealed that the total length of the body (Head to tail) was 75mm. The probable use of the occurrence record would give valuable information on the distribution of the species, which is enigmatic and often go unnoticed to the human eye.

**Keywords :** Occurrence, Indian Painted Bat, *Kerivoula picta*, Mudumalai Tiger Reserve.

*Kerivoula picta* belongs to the family Vespertilionidae and order Microchiroptera. Painted bats known to live either singly or occasionally in small groups of two individuals (Khan, 2001), they roost in the dried leaves of tree ferns and very often found in banana plantations (Bhat and Sreenivasan, 1990), and are also known to live in the inflorescence of banana plant. It is also found in tall grasses, flowers, among the dry leaves of vines (Lekagul and McNeely, 1977) and in sugar cane. It has been reported that Painted bats use Baya weaver bird's nests for shelter and/or littering (Sharma and Rakesh, 2002). It was also observed in semi-comatose state during the day and making very little effort to escape. If shaken into flight, it flutters around rather like a huge moth and quickly seeks cover (Phillips, 1980). Painted bats are relatively small sized bats and brightly colored. The entire body is bright orange or sometimes tawny red in colour and wings are conspicuously coloured in black. Body is completely covered by thick hairs which is orange in color. The total wing span is about 22-23 cm. Very little is known about their feeding habits. They are known to prey on small insects around bushes and from small patches of forests (Phillips, 1980).

This species is confined only to South East Asia (Bates and Harrison, 1997), but information about their distribution, roosting, reproduction and other important information is scanty (Phillips, 1980; Bates and Harrison, 1997). This widespread species has been recorded from southern and northeastern South Asia, southern China, most of the mainland Southeast Asia and some major islands in insular Southeast Asia.

In India there are 117 species of bats have been identified so far (Bates and Harrison, 1997; ZSI Report, 2009). But, there is very little information available on their distribution, habitat, feeding habits, reproduction, population size and biometry of the species. It is very

essential, because they play a major role in keeping the ecosystem healthy and they are considered as keystone species (Cox *et al.*, 1992).

Table: 1 Morphometric measurement of the species:

S.No	Morphometric measurement	
	Total length of the body (Head to tail)	75 mm
1	Head	14 mm
2	Body	26 mm
3	Tail	33 mm
4	Right wing	111mm
5	Left wing	110mm
6	Right ear	12 mm
7	Left ear	12 mm
8	Ear pinnae (Right)	07 mm
9	Ear pinnae (Left)	08 mm
10	Total wing span	223 mm

Mudumalai Tiger Reserve is the part of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. It lies on the north eastern and north western part of Nilgiris, rightly placed at the center of tri-junction of Bandipur Tiger Reserve (Karnataka) in the north, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (Kerala) in the west and Nilgiris North Division in the south and east part of the park. It is one of the largest biosphere reserves of the country. MTR is located between 110 30' and 110 39' N. latitude and between 760 27' and 760 43' E. longitude. Mudumalai has exceptional habitat diversity, with combination and interspersed of a variety of habitats ranging from semi evergreen, moist deciduous, dry-deciduous and open thorn scrub

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jungles. Because of these unique features, Mudumalai is residence for different kinds of unique flora and fauna. But appropriate scientific studies are lacking on many rare plants and animals. We had accidentally encountered a painted bat, which was roosting in the Crotons in a garden of resort which is located in Masinagudi village, eastern part of MTR. The occurrence of Indian painted bat inside the human habitation could reveal its distribution of species in the vicinity of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (Fig : 1 and 2). Yapa and Ratnasooriya (1995) and Phillips (1980) also confirmed the presence of this species close to human habitation. The morphometric measurement of the species is given the Table -1. The weight of the animal was 4grams. The new information on the occurrence of the species in MTR is useful for managers and stake holders to protect and conserve the cryptic bats, which are the dark jewels of the world.

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