

A camera-trap record of a brown Small Indian Civet *Viverricula indica* from Karnataka state, southern India

Shravan SUTHAR, Malaika MATHEW CHAWLA, Heruru Chandrakantha POORNESHA & Sanjay GUBBI

Abstract

Colour aberrations in small nocturnal mammals often go undocumented. During a camera-trapping survey focused on Leopard *Panthera pardus* in Chamundi Hills Reserved Forest, Karnataka state, southern India, a brown Small Indian Civet *Viverricula indica* was camera-trapped. This is the first known photographic evidence of a brown coat colour aberration in Small Indian Civet.

Keywords: colour aberration, anomalous colouring, Chamundi Hills Reserved Forest, Viverridae

Anomalous coat colours, including those associated with melanism, albinism and leucism, are found in many species of carnivores (e.g., Abreu et al. 2013, Mahabal et al. 2019). In India, colour aberrations have been documented in 56 mammal species (Mahabal et al. 2019). Mahabal et al. (2019) did not trace any records of brown colour aberrations in mammals in India. However, it is likely that the inaccurate identification of colour aberrations in the scientific literature, as noted by van Grouw (2021), contributes to the absence of records of brown colour aberrations. In India, albinism and piebaldism have been documen-

ted in civets (Mudappa 2013, Mahabal et al. 2019).

Normal-coloured Small Indian Civets *Viverricula indica* have a buff-grey coat with black spots arranged longitudinally along the flanks. The tail has alternating black and light grey/white bands, usually terminating in a white tail tip.

During a targeted camera-trap survey of Leopard *Panthera pardus*, in the Chamundi Hills Reserved Forest in Mysuru district of Karnataka, southern India (Fig. 1), a pale brownish Small Indian Civet was camera-trapped (Fig. 2) on 7 October 2015 at 23h40. The camera-trap was deployed at 12°15.54'N,

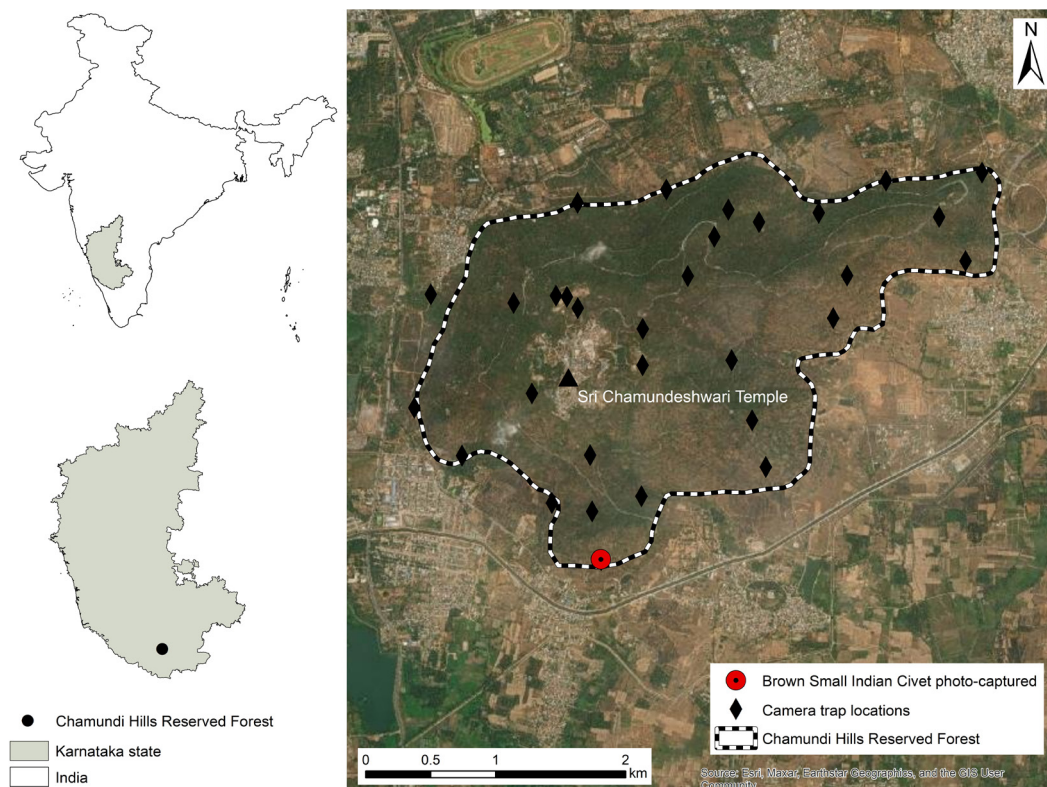


Fig. 1. Location of the brown Small Indian Civet *Viverricula indica* camera-trapped in Chamundi Hills Reserved Forest, Karnataka state, southern India.



Fig. 2. A Small Indian Civet *Viverricula indica* with a brown coat colour aberration. The animal was camera-trapped on 7 October 2015 at 23h40 in Chamundi Hills Reserved Forest, Karnataka state, southern India. ©Holématthi Nature Foundation.

76°40.38'E. The animal was recorded in a *Eucalyptus* plantation (Fig. 3), on the edge of dry deciduous forests and close to human habitations, at an elevation of approximately 750 m asl.

The spots on the flanks and the bands across the tail are pale brown in colour, against an even paler cream-brown background colour. The aberration was identified as brown on the basis of definitions provided for birds by van Grouw (2021). The animal is not white, and is therefore not an albino. Neither is this a case of leucism, which is indicated by patches of white to fully white colour. The aberration in this individual is consistent with the brown aberration, which is characterized by replacement of the original black coloration with brown colour; areas that are normally brown remain brown. Eye colour in brown individuals is normal (van Grouw 2021); the eye colour of the animal in Fig. 2 cannot be fully assessed, though it appears to be normal.

Acknowledgements

We are thankful to the Karnataka Forest Department for granting us permission to conduct the research work. We are also thankful to all the staff of Chamundi Hill Reserved Forest for their help and support provided during our fieldwork. We are especially grateful to the two reviewers who enriched this manuscript with their valuable feedback. We are grateful to the field staff for help during our research work.



Fig. 3. The habitat of the camera-trap location where the brown Small Indian Civet *Viverricula indica* was camera-trapped on 7 October 2015 in Chamundi Hills Reserved Forest, Karnataka state, southern India. The fence marking the boundary of the protected area is visible at the left. ©Holématthi Nature Foundation.

References

- Abreu, M. S. L., Machado, R., Barbieri, F., Freitas, N. S. & Oliveira, L. R. 2013. Anomalous colour in Neotropical mammals: a review with new records for *Didelphis* sp. (Didelphidae, Didelphimorphia) and *Arctocephalus australis* (Otariidae, Carnivora). *Brazilian Journal of Biology* 73: 185–194.
- Mahabal, A., Sharma, R. M., Patil, R. N. & Jadhav, S. 2019. Colour aberration in Indian mammals: a review from 1886 to 2017. *Journal of Threatened Taxa* 11: 13690–13719.
- Mudappa, D. 2013. Herpestids, viverrids and mustelids. Pp. 471–498 in Johnsingh, A. J. T. & Manjrekar, N. (eds) *Mammals of South Asia*. Hyderabad, India: Universities Press (India) Pvt.
- van Grouw, H. 2021. What's in a name? Nomenclature for colour aberrations in birds reviewed. *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 141: 276–299.

Shravan Suthar
Holématthi Nature Foundation, 135, 14th Main,
Banashankari 2nd Stage, Bengaluru–560 070, India.
Email: shravan4suthar@gmail.com