

Biodiversity Record: Lesser mousedeer feeding on flowers of African tulip tree

Joanne X. Y. Gui & Megan En Ru Yip*

Mandai Wildlife Group, 80 Mandai Lake Road, Singapore 729826; Email: joanne.gui@mandai.com, yermegan@gmail.com
(*corresponding author)

Recommended citation. Gui JXY & Yip MER (2022) Biodiversity Record: Lesser mousedeer feeding on flowers of African tulip tree. Nature in Singapore, 15: e2022056. DOI: 10.26107/NIS-2022-0056

Subjects: Lesser mousedeer, *Tragulus kanchil* (Mammalia: Artiodactyla: Tragulidae);
African tulip tree, *Spathodea campanulata* (Tracheophyta: Angiospermae: Bignoniaceae).

Subjects identified by: Joanne X. Y. Gui and Megan En Ru Yip.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Central Catchment Nature Reserve, Mandai forest; 8 February 2022; 1130–1200 hrs.

Habitat: Mature secondary forest.

Observers: Joanne X. Y. Gui and Megan En Ru Yip.

Observation: While conducting a routine camera trap maintenance survey, two mousedeer were observed foraging together in the forest (Fig. 1). After several minutes, one mousedeer wandered off alone and began feeding on fallen flowers of the African tulip tree. The animal consumed two entire flowers in the same area in less than ten minutes (Fig. 2). The mousedeer appeared at ease and continued eating despite being watched by two humans approximately 10 m away.

Remarks: The lesser mousedeer is regarded as a ‘critically endangered’ species in Singapore (Lim et al., 2008: 203). It is known to be a frugi-folivore and is selective with what it eats, preferring leaves, buds, and flowers when browsing (Ahrestani et al., 2016).

The African tulip tree, a native of West Africa, was first introduced to Singapore in the 1910s and planted as a roadside tree for its ornamental value. It has since proliferated throughout Singapore, dominates newly-abandoned land, and has been regarded as an invasive species (Corlett, 2015).

The featured observation is notable for a non-native tree being found to provide a source of food for a locally rare mammal. As African tulip trees flower throughout the year in Singapore, they could be a reliable source of food for mousedeer in secondary forests.

From our personal observations, the two mousedeer featured here appear to be the same individuals that have been repeatedly spotted in the Mandai forest over the past two years. Their apparent boldness suggests that they could have become habituated to human presence.

Literature cited:

- Ahrestani FS, Heitkönig IMA, Matsubayashi H, & Prins HHT (2016) Grazing and browsing by large herbivores in south and southeast Asia. Ecological Studies, Springer, Dordrecht, pp. 99–120.
- Corlett RT (2015) Invasive trees in Singapore: are they a threat to native forest? Tropical Conservation Science, 8(1): 201–214.
- Lim KKP, Subaraj R, Yeo SH, Lim N, Lane D & Lee BYH (2008) Mammals. In: Davison GWH, Ng PKL & Ho HC (eds.) The Singapore Red Data Book. Threatened Plants & Animals of Singapore. 2nd edition. The Nature Society (Singapore), Singapore, pp. 190–207.



Fig. 1. Two lesser mousedeer shortly before they separate. The individual on the right bears tusks and appears to be a male. (Photograph by: Joanne X. Y. Gui)



Fig. 2. One of the mousedeer eating a fallen flower of the African tulip tree. (Photograph by: Megan E. R. Yip)