

A pair of mating lesser mousedeer

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Subjects: Lesser mousedeer, *Tragulus kanchil* (Mammalia: Artiodactyla: Tragulidae).

Subjects identified by: Choo Ruirong.

Location, date and time: Singapore island, Central Catchment Nature Reserve, Lower Peirce forest, 10-20 m from Casuarina entrance; 2 September 2019; 1500-1630 hrs.

Habitat: Mature secondary rain-forest.

Observers: Choo Ruirong, Tina and others.

Observation: Two mousedeer were observed mating in the shade of the forest canopy about 5 m away from the boardwalk (see accompanying photograph and video at https://youtu.be/2g7_LNIaO3E), apparently oblivious to the presence of human observers. The male mounted the female approximately five times within the hour and a half from when they were first spotted. Each mounting lasted about five to ten minutes. The male mounted the female with his abdomen and his front limbs resting on the rump and back of his partner, supported by his hind limbs held steady to the ground. Before each mating, the male 'groomed' the female by licking her fur. Eventually, the female appeared to have had enough, and tried to get away from the male.



Photograph by Tina Thorup Kristoffersen

Remarks: In Singapore, the lesser mousedeer is regarded as 'Critically endangered' (Lim et al., 2008: 203). It is usually solitary, but sometimes seen in pairs. This observation implies that adult pairs occur when the female is receptive. During this period, she is closely followed by a male who will mate with her multiple times. From studies conducted elsewhere, *Tragulus kanchil* females are known to be monogamous, but the males seem to be polygynous. Mating occurs throughout the year in parts of its range in Southeast Asia and females are continuously pregnant with each producing two to three young per year. The male marks his territory and his females with a scent gland under his chin, and he will chase off and fight other males with his pair of long canine teeth (see Meijaard, 2011: 331).

The featured observation is noteworthy in showing that (presumably wild) mousedeer can be habituated to human presence in their environment for the two subjects seemed unperturbed by the several observers. The author notes that mousedeer at the Lower Peirce forest, probably the same pair featured here, have been photographed multiple times on separate occasions by many different people, who have recently and independently shared their images on social media platforms. The mousedeer could have gained confidence from human activity being strictly confined to the boardwalk.

References:

- 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; Second edition. The Nature Society (Singapore). pp. 190-207.
- Meijaard E (2011) Family Tragulidae (chevrotains). In: Wilson DE & Mittermeier [eds.] Handbook of the Mammals of the World 2. Hoofed Mammals. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. pp. 320-334.

Note: Choo Ruirong thanks fellow observer Tina Thorup Kristoffersen for the photograph and for recording the attached video clip.