

## Biodiversity Record: Carcass of a lesser mousedeer, *Tragulus kanchil*

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

**Subject identified by:** Ivan Neo.

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Island, Central Catchment Nature Reserve, Nee Soon swamp forest; 13 February 2023; 2027 hrs.

**Habitat:** Freshwater swamp forest.

**Observers:** Ivan Neo, Ting Wai Kit and Lee Ming De Samuel.



Fig. 1. Mousedeer carcass with skull exposed and tufts of fur strewn around it (Photograph by: Ivan Neo).

**Observation:** A carcass of a mousedeer, body length about 45 cm, was found on the left on the side of a forest trail (Fig. 1). The body seemed largely intact with no apparent superficial injury except for tufts of fur that had been pulled out and strewn around the carcass and across the trail. However, the head, at least one side, was stripped clean of skin, flesh and an eye (Fig. 2). Traces of liquid blood were noted beneath the carcass and within a 4 m radius (Fig. 3). The

carcass appeared fresh and the observers could not detect any odour of decomposition. No sound or activity was noted in the vicinity of the carcass, even when the observers turned off their headlamps and left the site for a while. The observers left the scene without touching the carcass.



Fig. 2. Close up of exposed side of head stripped of skin, flesh and eye. Fig. 3. One of the many traces of blood found within a 4 m radius of the carcass. (Photographs by: Ivan Neo)

**Remarks:** The condition of the mouse deer carcass seems bizarre. It appeared to be very fresh and seemed to have been eaten shortly before the observers came upon it. The consumer had either intended to eat only the head of the carcass, or it could have been disturbed by the observers approaching, and abandoned the carcass.

It is not known if the mouse deer was actually attacked and killed by a predator, or if it had died of natural causes and then scavenged on. However, as the carcass was not thoroughly examined, the evidence seems insufficient. Thus, the identity of the predator or scavenger is here regarded as a mystery.

Possible predators in the Central Catchment Nature Reserve that seem capable of killing and eating mouse deer might include the changeable hawk-eagle (Yong et al., 2017), the leopard cat (Chua et al., 2015; Grassman et al., 2005), feral domestic dogs (Teo & Rajathurai, 1997) and the reticulated python (Teo & Rajathurai, 1997).

**Note:** This observation was made during a faunistic fieldwork survey for pygmy grasshoppers (Orthoptera: Tetrigidae) under NParks permit NP/RP22-096.

**Literature cited:**

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