

## Biodiversity Record: Long-tailed macaques mounting and grooming sambar deer

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**Subjects:** Long-tailed macaque, *Macaca fascicularis* (Mammalia: Primates: Cercopithecidae);  
Sambar deer, *Rusa unicolor* (Mammalia: Artiodactyla: Cervidae).

**Subjects identified by:** Manuel Rigger and Jin Ting.

**Location, date and time:** Singapore Island, Mandai Track 15 (1°23'44.2"N 103°46'28.0"E); 25 January 2026; 1643–1648 hrs.

**Habitat:** Edge of secondary forest.

**Observers:** Manuel Rigger and Jin Ting.

**Observation:** A group of long-tailed macaques were observed interacting with a sambar. Up to four macaques at a time were sitting on the deer's back and grooming its dorsal area and ears (Fig. 1). The monkeys mounted the sambar over its hindquarters. The deer seemed calm and did not exhibit signs of distress toward the macaques. However, when the deer noticed the observers, it became alert, repeatedly tilting its head, causing the macaques around it to increase their distance. The macaques on the sambar's back dismounted when it started to move away. Two other sambar sighted in the vicinity were not interacting with monkeys.



Fig. 1 Four long-tailed macaques on a sambar, with at least two individuals grooming the dorsal region and ears of the deer (Screen grab from video recorded by: Manuel Rigger).

A video recording of the interaction is available on Zenodo (DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18428184). The footage was recorded in low light with a mobile phone with 10× optical zoom.

**Remarks:** Mounting and grooming behaviours by non-human primates on deer have been documented previously. These include interactions between rhesus macaques (*Macaca mulatta*) and sambar deer in India (Vasava et al., 2013), as well as between Japanese macaques (*Macaca fuscata*) and sika deer (*Cervus nippon*) in Japan (Depret et al., 2025). However, we were unable to find records of *Macaca fascicularis* physically interacting with sambar deer. Thus, it is possible that the featured observation could be the first documented for these two species. Such inter-species interactions have been attributed to mutual benefits, including parasite removal for the deer and potential nutritional gains for the macaques (Depret et al., 2025).

**Literature cited:**

Vasava AG, Mahato S, Navaneethan M & Dashahre A (2013) Grooming of sambar (*Rusa unicolor*) by rhesus macaque (*Macaca mulatta*) in Sariska Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan, India. *Current Science*, 104: 296–298.

Depret L, Ohshima A, Allanic M, Leca JB, Gunst N & Sueur C (2025) Monkey-deer rodeo: exploring the mounting behaviours of Japanese macaques (*Macaca fuscata*) on sika deer (*Cervus nippon*). *Primates*, 66: 221–231.