

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

1. FIRST RECORD OF LESSER FALSE VAMPIRE *MEGADERMA SPASMA* (LINNAEUS, 1758) IN MADHYA PRADESH, INDIA¹K.R. SENACHA²¹Accepted July 30, 2007²Bombay Natural History Society, Hornbill House, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Mumbai 400 001, Maharashtra, India.
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The Indian False Vampire *Megaderma spasma* is a carnivorous bat occurring in the Indian subcontinent and in Southeast Asia. In India, it has been reported from the states of Assam, Mizoram and West Bengal in the east, and Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the south, as well as the Andaman Islands (Fig. 1). Though specimens of *M. spasma* have been collected from Andhra Pradesh state, site specific information remains scanty (Bates and Harrison 1997). However, there is no existing record of its occurrence from central, western and northern parts of the country. Recently I saw this species for the first time in Madhya Pradesh state, central India (Fig. 1).

It was in the late afternoon of February 27, 2005, when I, along with my colleague Mr. Anant Khot, explored bat roosts along the southern bank of River Narmada near Bheda Ghat, a tourist hotspot about 15 km west of Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh. The Lamheti village is situated 2 km east of Bheda Ghat on the southern bank of the Narmada, and is surrounded by lush green vegetation. On the eastern periphery of this village is situated a temple of Lord Shiva (23° 06' 11.79" N; 79° 50' 45.28" E, at 396 m above msl), and a dilapidated building in its premises served as a mixed roost for two microchiropteran, the Greater False Vampire *Megaderma lyra* and the Lesser False Vampire *Megaderma*

spasma. We approached this roosting site at 1630 hrs along with two local children and found a mixed colony of bats roosting on the ceiling in a partially dark portion of this building. The group consisted of around 80 individuals, but the proportion of each species could not be assessed. A few individuals hung separately while others roosted close to each other forming a cluster at the centre of the ceiling. They were disturbed by our entry, and the bats moved out one by one to an adjoining building, but I could catch three of them in a hoop net. All three individuals were studied for morphological measurements (Table 1) and studied closely for key characteristics and released back. Our investigations showed that one of these individuals was a *Megaderma lyra*, whereas the other two were *Megaderma spasma*.

Though *Megaderma lyra* is distributed widely all across India, *M. spasma* was previously understood to be restricted to the southern and eastern parts of the country (Fig. 1). The current finding represents the first record of *M. spasma* from the state of Madhya Pradesh. It significantly extends the distribution range of this species from west to central India, 371 km from the nearest site, Chanda in Maharashtra from where it has been reported earlier (Bates and Harrison 1997). Although Wroughton (1913) did find the two species together

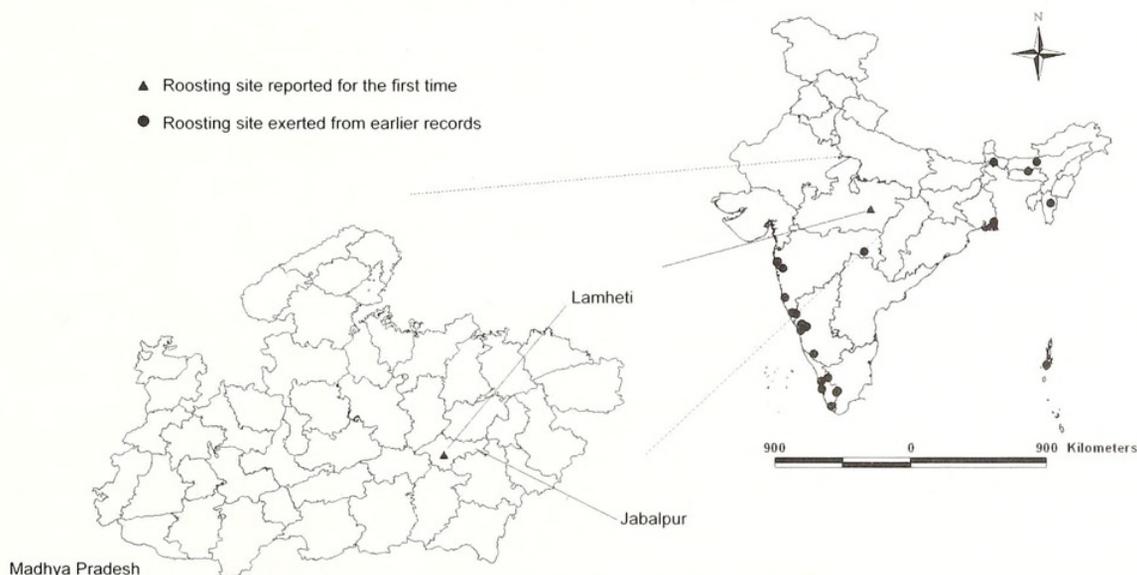


Fig. 1: Distribution status of Lesser False Vampire *Megaderma spasma* in India with old and newly recorded roosting sites

Table 1: Morphometric measurements (in millimetres) of *Megaderma lyra* and *Megaderma spasma* specimens caught from the temple roost in Lamheti village in Jabalpur Madhya Pradesh

Name of the body part	<i>Megaderma lyra</i>		<i>Megaderma spasma</i>	
	Male (n=1)	Male (n=1)	Female (n=1)	
Head and Body length	80.2	65.2	66.3	
Hind foot	15.9	14.9	14.8	
Forearm	64.3	55.7	55.5	
Ear	36.7	34.2	34.6	
Wing span	410.4	308	311	
Nose leaf	9.4	6.1	6.2	

inside a temple in Karnataka, the co-existence of *M. lyra* and *M. spasma* has been rarely seen in India.

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2. SECOND RECORD OF ALBINO FIVESTRIPED PALM SQUIRREL *FUNAMBULUS PENNANTI* WROUGHTON FROM UDAIPUR, RAJASTHAN¹

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The Fivestriped Palm Squirrel *Funambulus pennanti* has distinct five pale strips on its grayish-brown or olive-brown body (Menon 2003; Prater 2005). A number of local races are recognized on the basis of differences in the lightness or darkness of the coat, or variations in the tones of the dorsal strips (Prater 2005). Unlike the characters mentioned in the guide books, we sighted a solitary, white Fivestriped Palm Squirrel in the residential area of north Udaipur (Rajasthan) from mid-July 2005. On close observation of the animal, we found that the Squirrel was albino with only a small brownish patch in the middle of the dorsal side of the body (Eds: photographic evidence provided); the eyes were red. This is the second case of albinism in the Fivestriped Palm Squirrel from Rajasthan. Although, the first record of albino Fivestriped from Rajasthan was by Sharma (2004); albinism in the Fivestriped Squirrel has been reported only thrice in India (Mahabal *et al.* 2005).

According to Mahabal *et al.* (2005), albinism is said to

be rare in rodents. This is also evident from the earlier works (Rajgopalan 1967; Pradhan 1975; Chaturvedi and Ghosh 1984).

The reported albino squirrel was sighted throughout a cloudy day but its movement was restricted to morning and evening hours on sunny days. This albino individual lived in a house under construction

The solitary individual was very alert. As soon as we approached, it would escape. A distance of more than 6 m was maintained while taking observations and photographing. How long it may be sighted after the house is occupied cannot be predicted.

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