

A Common Palm Civet *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus* observed feeding on the nuptial flight of termite alates in Similipal Tiger Reserve, India

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Abstract

A Common Palm Civet *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus* was observed feeding on the evening emergence of termite swarms in Similipal Tiger Reserve in February 2020. The Common Palm Civet devoured the termite alates from the forest floor for about eight minutes. The sighting gives an insight into Common Palm Civet insectivory. Camera-trap records of two colour morphs of Common Palm Civet from Similipal Tiger Reserve are also included in this short note.

Keywords: colour morphs, diet, ecology, Isoptera, Paradoxurinae, Viverridae

Common Palm Civet *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus* is known to feed on fruits, nectar, arthropods and small vertebrates (Prater 1965, Rabinowitz 1991, Krishnakumar & Balakrishnan 2003, Jothish 2011, Hunter & Barrett 2018). Here, we present an observation of a Common Palm Civet feeding on the termite swarms (the nuptial flight of termite alates) in Similipal Tiger Reserve in the Indian state of Odisha.

The observation of the Common Palm Civet feeding on termite alates was made by Rathore on the evening of 28 February 2020, while returning from fieldwork. The observation was made soon after sunset at 18h14 in the National Park Range of Similipal Tiger Reserve (21°44'37"N, 86°13'00"E). During the drive through a part of the reserve characterised by Tropical Moist Deciduous Forest (Champion & Seth 1968), dominated by *Sal Shorea robusta*, a Common Palm Civet was seen on the forest road about 15 m

in front of the vehicle. It was observed feeding voraciously on termite swarms (Family: Isoptera) (see [Supplementary Video](#)). The Common Palm Civet was observed quickly picking up the alates dispersed on the forest floor one after another and it never attempted to catch the flying individuals. As the headlights of our vehicle were turned on throughout the observation, a large number of alates were attracted to it. Following the termites, the civet approached the front of the vehicle, where it devoured termites under the vehicle's headlights. The civet was observed feeding for about eight minutes; it then left the forest road and disappeared into the understorey. After the civet was out of sight, a few alate specimens (Fig. 1c) were collected from the forest floor.

As termites have high protein, fat and water content, they are an excellent nutrient source for many predators (Nutting 1969). A generalist such



Fig. 1. Camera-trap images of (a) the typical morph and (b) the black-white morph of Common Palm Civet *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*, recorded at the same camera-trap station in Similipal Tiger Reserve, Odisha, India, in 2019. (c) A termite alate (Family: Isoptera) collected at the site where a Common Palm Civet *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus* was observed feeding on termites on 28 February 2020 (scale in cm).



as Common Palm Civet is well equipped to take advantage of the unpredictable explosive emergence of winged reproductive males and females from a termite mound (Dial & Vaughan 1987). However, such incidents of insectivory are rarely recorded or filmed in wild civets; this note adds to our knowledge of the diets of Common Palm Civet.

Apart from the typical colour morph of Common Palm Civet, Similipal Tiger Reserve is also home to a black-white morph (Ali et al. 1988). Both morphs of the species were recorded by a camera-trap between January and February 2019 (Fig. 1a, b).

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