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Investigation of Murid rodents in Matara area

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A study of murid rodents was carried out from February – August 2012 at five different localities of the Matara area. The survey was done using a standardized eight assessment line method by using eight Sherman live traps. Two types of bait, namely roasted coconut and dried fish were used. In 560 samples (8 traps X 14 occasions X 5 sites), 130 individuals (N) of 06 species and sub species of murid rodents namely, *Rattus rattus kandianus*, (N = 95, 73.08%), *Mus mayori mayori* (N = 4, 3.08%), *Rattus norvegicus* (N = 26, 20.00%), *Bandicota indica indica* (N = 3, 2.31%), *Vandeleuria spp.* (N = 1, 0.77%) and *Millardia spp.* (N = 1, 0.77%) were collected. Among the total number of captured murids, 54 (41.53%) were females and 76 (58.47%) were males.

The number of murids captured at different study sites was as follows: Site A; paddy field associated habitat (N = 24), Site B, town area (N = 23), Site C, dumping sites (N = 22), Site D, natural (Kekanadura) forest edge (N = 30) and site E, natural (Kekanadura) forest (N = 31). The number of species captured at study sites were, 4 species at site A, 3 species at site B, 3 species at site C, 2 species at site D and 6 species at site E. Although 4 traps each were used for two bait types, a higher number of individuals were captured in coconut baited traps (N = 105). Females have shown significantly higher preference for the dried fish bait type ($\chi^2 = 0.037$, $P > 0.05$).

The present study reveals the very high habitat adaptability in *R. kandianus* and *R. norvegicus* as these two species were found at all study sites. Since all six species and sub species were present in natural forest it could be emphasized that natural habitats are still the most important reservoirs for small murid species.

Keywords: Bait types, murid rodents, Sherman live trap