

SMITHSONIAN MISCELLANEOUS COLLECTIONS

VOLUME 68, NUMBER 10

NEW RODENTS FROM BRITISH EAST AFRICA

BY

N. HOLLISTER



(PUBLICATION 2489)

CITY OF WASHINGTON
PUBLISHED BY THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
JANUARY 16, 1918

The Lord Baltimore Press
BALTIMORE, MD., U. S. A.

NEW RODENTS FROM BRITISH EAST AFRICA

By N. HOLLISTER

The following hitherto undescribed subspecies of rodents have been found in the collections made by the Smithsonian African Expedition in 1909, and by the Rainey African Expedition of 1911 and 1912.

RATTUS COUCHA TINCTUS, subsp. nov.

Type from Kaimosi, Kavirondo, British East Africa; adult male (teeth moderately worn), skin and skull, U. S. Nat. Museum No. 183294. Collected January 24, 1912, by Edmund Heller. Orig. No. 5188.

Diagnosis.—A large, dark-colored subspecies of *Rattus coucha* with the underparts dark grayish buff, drab, or tawny olive (apparently never grayish white as in the related forms).

Color of type specimen.—Entire upperparts blackish brown, slightly sprinkled with dark clay color. The hairs are broadly dark slate at bases, many of them blackish to tips, while others have a terminal or subterminal ring of clay color or dark tawny. Sides paler than back, with more tawny and less black. Underparts only slightly lighter than sides, the hairs slate at bases and tipped with clay color, with considerable dark from the undercolor showing through. Arms and legs dark brownish to wrist and heel, the hands and feet creamy whitish. Tail blackish brown, slightly lighter at base below.

This is an average specimen in color, but some skins in the series are somewhat brighter, with more tawny above or below. All agree in having intensely colored underparts only slightly differentiated from the color of the flanks.

Skull and teeth essentially as in *Rattus coucha ugandæ*, but averaging more robust.

Measurements.—The type, with dimensions of an older male (No. 183295) in parentheses: Head and body, 160 (160) mm.; tail vertebrae, 133 (148); hind foot from dry skin, 26 (30); greatest length of skull, 34.6 (36.1); condylobasal length, 33.3 (35.0); zygomatic breadth, 16.8 (17.9); mastoid breadth, 13.6 (14.3); upper tooth row, alveoli, 5.5 (5.8).

Remarks.—In a large collection of specimens of multimammate rats from many parts of eastern Africa, the series of nineteen skins from Kaimosi is conspicuous on account of the generally dark color above and because of the absence of any specimens with light-colored underparts. The skins and skulls average larger in size than those of neighboring forms. The new subspecies is most closely related to *Rattus coucha unganæ* (de Winton), described from Entebbe and represented in the National Museum collection by numerous examples from the north shore of Victoria Nyanza and Unyoro.

PEDETES SURDASTER LARVALIS, subsp. nov.

Type from Ulukenia Hills, Athi Plains, British East Africa; adult female, skin and skull, U. S. Nat. Museum No. 163304. Collected November 21, 1909, by J. Alden Loring. Orig. No. 8250.

Diagnosis.—Like *Pedetes surdaster surdaster* of the Naivasha Plains but less richly colored and skull with much deeper face. A supraorbital elevation on each side of the median depression in frontals, on the anterior portion of frontal bone and at the base of nasal, gives the profile view an evenly rounded outline from mastoid to nasal [in typical *surdaster* the braincase is higher and the sinciput low, so that a profile view presents a very uneven line, much raised posteriorly and with a decided depression over the lachrymal region in the center]. Most of the bones of the face are involved in the producing of the much greater depth of the entire anterior portion of the skull, which is conspicuous when compared in profile or from anterior view with skulls of typical *surdaster*. The rostrum is much deeper and the antorbital region, including the foramen and antorbital plate, much higher and comparatively narrow. Suture between frontals and parietals nearly straight across skull, with only slight anterior convexity [in *surdaster* always with distinct and usually pointed salient]. Size essentially as in *surdaster*.

Measurements of type.—Head and body, 370 mm.; tail vertebrae, 427; hind foot, 159; ear, 82. Skull: Condylbasal length, 78.2; zygomatic breadth, 55.2; greatest breadth nasals, 21.7; height of skull in front of orbits, from anterior alveolar border to highest point on crown directly above lachrymal bone, 36.2 [in numerous specimens of typical *surdaster*, 30.5 to 32.4]; mastoid breadth, 45.4; upper tooth row, crowns, 16.3.

Remarks.—Four specimens of this new form from the Athi Plains have been compared with forty-six specimens of *Pedetes surdaster surdaster* from Naivasha Station, near the type locality.

PEDETES SURDASTER CURRAX, subsp. nov.

Type from Kabalolot Hill, Sotik, British East Africa; adult male, skin and skull, U. S. Nat. Museum No. 181762. Collected May 7, 1911, by Edmund Heller. Orig. No. 1802.

Diagnosis.—Decidedly more yellowish, less reddish, than *Pedetes surdaster surdaster*, and with longer tail. Skull with upper outline in profile as in *surdaster*, but with the high rostrum and antorbital region in general more like *P. s. larvalis*. Mastoids more enlarged than in either, the skull with greater mastoid breadth.

Measurements of type.—Head and body, 400 mm.; tail vertebræ, 480; hind foot, 157; ear, 73. Skull: Condylbasal length, 75.3; zygomatic breadth, 55.7; greatest breadth nasals, 19.0; height of skull in front of orbits, from anterior alveolar border to highest point on crown directly above lachrymal bone, 33.6; mastoid breadth, 46.1 [in numerous skulls of true *surdaster* from 41.9 to 43.8]; upper tooth row, crowns, 15.9.

Remarks.—This new form is based on a single specimen which cannot be matched for color or great mastoid breadth of skull by any specimen out of a series of nearly fifty specimens from the type locality of *surdaster*. All three forms of *surdaster*, from the Sotik, Naivasha Plains, and Athi Plains, differ from the South African *P. cafer* in the shallowness of the anterior palatine depression.