

ON THE SPINY MICE OF BRITISH EAST AFRICA,
WITH A DESCRIPTION OF A NEW SPECIES
FROM MAGADI

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In the collection of mammals recently presented to the British Museum by A. Blayney Percival, Esq., is a series of Spiny Mice from Magadi, South Masailand District, British East Africa; these specimens represent an entirely new species, which is here described as

Acomys nubilus, sp. n.

About equal to *Acomys Wilsoni* in size, but with longer tail and very much darker in general colour.

Size of body less than in the *ignitus* and *pulchellus* groups, more as in the short-tailed *Wilsoni*; tail fairly long, measuring from 65 to 67 mm. in length, and thus much longer than in the other small species, where the tail very rarely exceeds 50 mm. in length.

General colour of dorsal surface dark sepia-brown, slightly speckled with buff, but not exhibiting the marked speckled effect found in *Wilsoni* and *ablutus*. Flanks pale buff, speckled with dark brown. Backs of hands and feet dirty white. Entire underparts white.

Skull very much like that of *Wilsoni*, slightly larger throughout, with a rather broader brain-case.

Dimensions of the type (measured in the flesh): Head and body 83 mm.; tail 65; hind foot 14; ear 12.

Skull of type badly broken; the following dimensions are those of another specimen, No. 1477, from the type-locality: greatest length 25.4; condylo-incisive length 22.4; zygomatic breadth 12; interorbital constriction 4.5; breadth of brain-case 12; length of palatal foramina 5.8; length of upper molar series 4.

This specimen (No. 1477) is exactly similar to the type in general colour, but I have not been able to use it as a type, since the tail is badly broken.

Type.—Adult. Original number 1481. Collected June 14, 1913.

This striking and distinct species is immediately distinguished from *A. Wilsoni* by its very much longer tail and darker colour; in general colour *nubilus* is darker than any of the other East African *Acomys*, with the exception of the slate-coloured *Percivali*. It is a little difficult to decide to which group this species belongs, and for the present it seems most satisfactory to regard it as a link between the large long-tailed *ignitus* group and the short-tailed *Wilsoni*.

The following are the various forms of *Acomys* now recognised in British East Africa:—

1. *Acomys ignitus*, Dollm., originally described from specimens collected by Mr. Kemp at Voi, has since been found by Mr. Percival at various localities between Voi and the coast. There are now before me specimens from the Taru Desert and Witu which are undoubtedly true *ignitus*. On the west this species was found by Mr. W. P. Lowe on the Southern Guaso Nyiro and Narossura rivers in the Nyanza Province.

2. *Acomys i. Kempfi*, Dollm., has been recorded from many localities along the Northern Guaso Nyiro; the type-locality of this form is the Chandler Falls. Mr. Percival has collected *Kempfi* all along the river as far as the Lorian Swamp, and in the west he has found it at Baringo and on the Larrogie Mountains and Mathews Range.

3. *Acomys i. montanus*, Hell., is only known from the specimens collected by Mr. Percival in the Marsabit District.

4. *Acomys Percivali*, Dollm., was first found on the Northern Guaso Nyiro at the Chandler Falls. Since this discovery Mr. Percival has collected this conspicuous species on the Laikipia Plateau and on Mt. Urguess (Mt. Gargues).

5. *Acomys pulchellus*, Dollm., type-locality Chandler Falls, Northern Guaso Nyiro, has been collected by Mr. Percival at Lasamis on the Marsabit Road; a specimen from as far north as Mt. Nyiro seems also to belong to this species.

6. *Acomys nubilus*, Dollm., is known only from the specimens collected by Mr. Percival at Magadi.

7. *Acomys Wilsoni*, Thos., originally described from Mombasa, has since been collected at Kitui, Voi, Taveta, Teita Hills, Tsavo River, Yata Plains, Mazeras, Taru Desert, Sagala, and the Witu Forest.

8. *Acomys W. ablutus*, Dollm., a close ally of the above, was founded on a series of specimens obtained by Mr. Kemp at Nyama Nyango, on the Northern Guaso Nyiro.

These eight forms may be arranged for identification as follows :—

- A. Tail long, more than 75 mm. in length.
 - a. Size of body large (head and body about 100 mm. in length).
 - a'. Colour of dorsal surface bright orange-rufous *ignitus*
 - b'. Colour of dorsal surface pale greyish sandy buff *i. Kempii*.
 - c'. Colour of dorsal surface vinaceous drab *i. montanus*.
 - b. Size of body smaller (head and body about 90 mm. in length).
 - a'. Dorsal surface pale greyish buff ; underparts pure white. Spines slender *pulchellus*.
 - b'. Dorsal surface slate-grey ; underparts dirty grey, never pure white. Spines coarse *Percivali*.
- B. Tail short, never more than 70 mm. in length
 - a. Tail more than 60 mm. in length (average length 66). General colour of back dark sepia-brown *nubilus*.
 - b. Tail less than 60 mm. in length (average length 50 mm.)
 - a'. General colour bright rufous-orange speckled with brown *Wilsoni*.
 - b'. General colour drab-brown, speckled with pale buff. Size rather smaller *W. ablutus*.