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ON *OCHOTONA*, A NEW RODENT UNRECORDED FROM HOKKAIDO

BY

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新に北海道に発見されたるナキウサギに就て

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The rodential mammals so far recorded from Hokkaido were confined to the hare, rats and squirrels. No new rodent has been added during these sixty years in spite of many works which dealt with the mammalian fauna of Hokkaido. It was in early October 1928 that a new rodent was captured in the Kitami mountains of Hokkaido (Fig. 1. x). The animal has been identified as *Ochotona** sp., that is the so-called whistling hare (*Pfeifhase*), which is native to Central Asia and America. The distribution of the animal in the Asiatic Continent is known to extend to the north-eastern part, including Mongolia, Siberia and Kamchatka.** It was in a place of a new plantation (after a forest fire) in Oketo section of the Nok-



Fig. 1.

*Prof. HATTA agrees with us.

**BREHM, '14. Tierleben, Säugetiere. SCHRENK, '59. Reisen u. Forsch. Amur-Lande.

keushi Government Forest, where the animal was first found. Formerly there the young larch trees were damaged every year, early in the summer time, in a very peculiar manner, by some unknown pest. So almost four years of unsuccessful attempts at reforestation had elapsed since the year of the first plantation, 1925.

When the government experts were almost ready to give up the plan of reforestation, the animal was captured for the first time and since then some ten individuals have been captured, three of which are fortunately accessible to us in making these notes.

The two localities where the damage by the animal has always been reported are restricted to steep stony hill sides facing towards the south; they are situated not far from each other, the one ($143^{\circ}30' E, 43^{\circ}39' N$, about 400 m



Fig. 2.

above the sea-level; covering an area of about 500 m²) facing on the On'neanzu glen, near Oketo, and the other (extending about 200 m²) being at a distance of about 700 m from the former across the glen.

The animals make large communities and have the habits generally known for

the other whistling hares.* So they live in a cave which has usually several entrances (Fig. 2), the connecting canals being 50 to 100 cm deep. They are mostly of nocturnal habit and are hardly ever seen in the daytime. The sexual season is said to occur generally in May. During the summer they are busy in storing food for the long winter which lasts for them from November to April. However, it is rather peculiar to the present species of Hokkaido, that they heap up their store-provisions within their caves and never outdoors. Relishingly they gnaw off the young plant of the larch, *Laryx Kaempferi* SARG., and the wild raspberry, *Rubus palmatus* THUNB., at about the ground level,

*BREHM, '14.

leaving the root parts, then cut them into pieces and carry them away into the cave. Such damage is peculiar and easily distinguishable from that done by the hare or the wild rats.

For the extermination of the animal, starch paste containing typhoid bacilli or "Kororin", poisonous grains such as BAYER's Zelio-giftkörner, and grains coated with arsenic acid, which are all effective

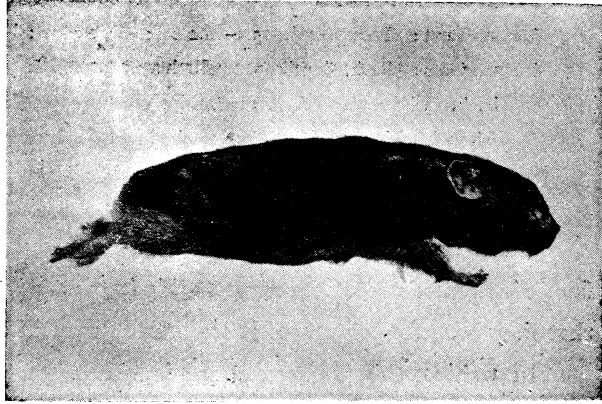


Fig. 3.

A side view of the animal. $\times \frac{1}{3}$

against the wild rats were used by the officers concerned. Though it has been difficult to know whether any of these poisons were effective or not, it seems true that the animal has been diminished considerably in number. In the meantime the young larches relieved of their damage have grown up and most of the caves of the whistling hares seem now to have been occupied by the wild rats.

Further identification of the species will be undertaken soon and we are satisfied at present to confine ourselves to giving merely the oecological re-

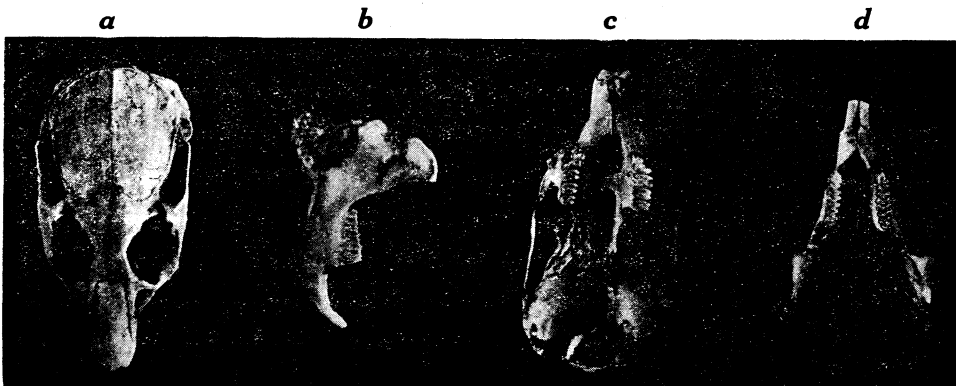


Fig. 4.

The skull of the animal. a, from above; c, from below. The lower jaw. b, from side; d, from above.

marks about the animal as above together with a brief description as follows:

Dental formula: $i \frac{2}{1}, m \frac{5}{5}$

Measurement: Body length, 15.1-18.2 cm; ear, 2.4 cm; hind foot, 2.7-3.1 cm; tail hardly visible.

Body colours: Back, darkbrown with blackish ends of hairs; vertex, neck and hind part of the back, dark brown; side of the head, greyish, yellowish brown; snout, dark brown with blackish ends of hairs; side of the trunk, burnt, yellowish brown; ears are bordered with whitish very short hairs; beard bristles, dark or yellowish brown; extremities, greyish, brownishish yellow; and claws, dark brown with yellowish tips. (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4)

The same species or near relatives should be found in Sakhalin, as the faunistic relations of mammals of Hokkaido and Sakhalin are in so close connection that they are often arranged in the same group in the distribution of mammals.

In writing this paper we are indebted greatly to Mr. AIZAWA, a government expert of Hokkaido-cho, to Mr. INOKUCHI, the head officer and to Mr. NAGAWOKA, a member, of Nokkeushi Branch Office of the Forestry Bureau. In this place we wish to express our best thanks for their kind help and information.

摘 要

昭和三年十月北海道北見國野付牛營林區置戸事業區内に於いて捕獲されたる齧齒類は北海道に於いては初めて発見されたるものにして、ナキウサギ *Ochotona* 屬に屬し、中央アジア、アメリカ等に産するナキウサギに近似なる種類なり。該事業區に於ける此の動物による被害は山火後大正十四年の落葉松植林當時に初まり、其の後四年間特に著しく年々補植する稚樹は直ちに其の地上部を何處へか持ち去るゝの奇現象を呈したり。此の動物は野鼠に比し頗る伶俐にして夜行性なれば人目に觸るゝことも少く當局者の所有苦心に係らず今日まで捕獲されたる者殆ど十頭に過ぎずと云ふ。性群居を好み南面の山腹の石礫多き斜面に石礫及び焼失樹木の殘存部主として根等を利用し其の下に穴を穿ちて巢を營む。穴には必ず數個の入口を有す。彼等の蕃殖期は概ね五月にして恐らく年一回のみならん。冬眠をなすことなければ永き冬籠りのために食物を貯ふべく夏、秋の候好んでキイチゴ、落葉松の稚樹等を襲ひ、是等の植物をその根もとより切りとり寸斷してこれを巢中に搬入す。これ他の *Ochotona* 屬動物が巢外適當の場所を求めて食草を蕃殖するものと著しく趣を異にする習性なりといふべし。

被害當初より特種野鼠と稱せられ野鼠用驅除劑を以つてこれが驅除に當られたりといふ。現在彼等の巢も野鼠のため占領されたるもの少なからず。個體數も著しく減じしものゝ如し。その動物學上の種の確定は後日に譲り、茲には單にその発見と生態とを報告するに止む。

アジャに於ける哺乳類分布の状態に依り察するに恐らく同種類の動物か又はこれに近似なる種類が樺太島に於いても発見せらるべきものと信ず。

本稿を草するに當り北海道廳技師相澤氏、野付牛營林區署長井ノ口氏及び森林主事長岡氏に負ふ所大なり。茲に更めて深甚なる謝意を表す。

(北海道帝國大學農學部動物學教室)