

## **The Andamans...30<sup>th</sup> January to 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2013.**

**John & Jane Hopkins, UK.**

*Below is the 'Mammal' extract from the above paper. The full trip report can be seen at*

*[http://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/HOPKINS\\_India\\_0102\\_2013.pdf](http://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/HOPKINS_India_0102_2013.pdf)*

### **Mammals.**

On 1/2/13 we were birding along the road at Chidia Tapu ( a tract of native lowland forest S. of Port Blair) when we disturbed a small mammal from the road. It ran to the side but we stood back and it returned....it had found a food item ( maybe a road-kill Dragonfly?) in a niche in the road surface. Several times it was spooked by passing vehicles or pedestrians but returned to its food item. On our return to the UK we set about the process of identifying it. Clearly a Shrew of some type, it soon became apparent that the short-list was

- 1) Asian House Shrew ( apparently un-recorded on the islands, usually found around habitation and structurally different from our 'beast'.
- 2) Andaman's Shrew
- 3) Jenkin's Shrew.

We then embarked on a long correspondence with mammal experts all over the world and a reasonably thorough search of the literature. The general consensus was that it was a Crocidura shrew, ( nos. 2 & 3 above) but that the exact species could not be determined without a specimen. Both of these shrews are poorly known....there would appear to be only a couple of specimens of each and approximately the same number of sightings. Our own view is that from the basic colour of the fur it was more likely to be Andaman's Shrew but with the present state of knowledge a conclusive identification would only be possible by studying skull ossification and the dentition. One thing is certain though...whatever the precise species involved, it was certainly the rarest and most poorly known 'creature' we saw on our visit to the islands !

( If anybody is interested in this mammal and can help with the identification or would like any more information or more photographs, I can be contacted on [johnhopkins77ATbtinternet.com](mailto:johnhopkins77ATbtinternet.com) )

