Description of *Lophuromys rahmi* a new species of Muridae from Central Africa

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A few months ago the Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika (Tervuren) received a small collection of Rodents collected by Dr. U. RAHM in the Kivu area (Congo Republic). Amidst a number of other interesting species I found a series of skins and skulls of a small *Lophuromys* that was strikingly different from all that I had seen up till then from the Congo. After a thorough verification of all possible descriptions, I came to the conclusion that I was dealing with a new species.

Hoping to obtain more specifications concerning the real affinities of this new form, I submitted a specimen to my colleague R. W. HAYMAN of the British Museum (Natural History). He kindly compared it with all the type-specimens of *Lophuromys* present in the British Museum collections and he too comes to the conclusion that it is undoubtedly a new species.

I am very pleased to dedicate this new species of *Lophuromys* to my colleague Dr. U. RAHM, who is doing so much for the further development of the zoological sciences in Central Africa.

Lophuromys rahmi spec. nov.

Type: adult ♀, skin and skull, Tervuren Museum RGMT 31576, original nr L 12367 and LR 12350, Bogamanda near Lemera - Territoire Kalehe - Kivu Province - République du Congo (Léopoldville), mountain forest, collected on the 17th october 1963 by Dr. U. RAHM.

Paratypes:

Tervuren Museum RGMT:

nr 28990, ♀, skin only, Kamugondo - Kahuzi - Kivu Prov., 5th sept. 1960.

nr 28983, ♀, skin + skull, Thanchima - Tchamola - Kivu Prov., 3th may 1960.

nr 30259, ♀, skin + skull, Buhobera II - Kivu Prov., 19th febr. 1959.

nr 30400, ♂, skin + skull, Biragorago (gorge) - Kivu Prov., 18th june 1959.

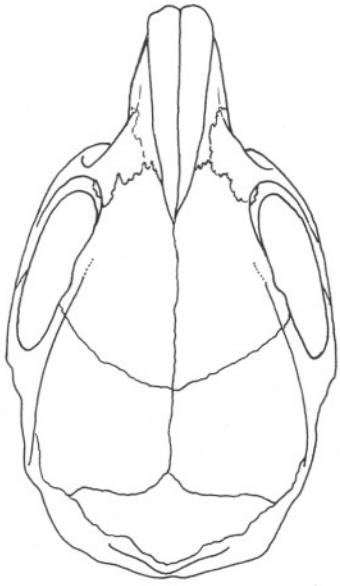

Fig. 1. — Dorsal view of a skull of an adult *Lophuromys rahmi* sp. nov. This drawing shows clearly the very short rostrum and the large interorbital constriction which are so typical for this species. Scale: × 3.

nr 31577, no sex, skin + skull, Uinka - Rwanda, 28th may 1962.

nr 31578, no sex, skin only, Uinka - Rwanda, 1st june 1962.

nr 31579, no sex, skin + skull, Uinka - Rwanda, 11th june 1962.

All collected by Dr. U. RAHM.

IRSAC - Collection DIETERLEN:

nr D 154, ♂, skin + skull, Tshibati - Kivu Prov., 26th june 1963.

Diagnosis :

This new species can be clearly distinguished from all the known Congo *Lophuromys* by :

1° the very small length of the skull (see table I meas. nrs 1, 2, 3, 4);
2° the very short rostrum (see table I meas. nrs 5, 6, 7);
3° the very short footlength and taillength (see discussion).

Coloration: (based on 9 specimens; codification of the Munsell Book of Colour).

Dorsal side: 2,5 YR 2/1,5-2.
Ventral side: 2,5YR 4,5/6,5.

The coloration of the skin is in general rather close to that of *L. sikapusi.*

— Dorsal region much darker than the ventral side. The basal part of each hair clearly lighter than the top which is dark reddish brown; in fact the basal part is just a shade darker than the coloration of the ventral side of the body which is of a bright reddish orange. Generally speaking the back is uniformly coloured, but in some specimens a very slight and nearly imperceptible speckling can be traced. On the lateral sides of the body the coloration changes gradually from the heavy coloured dorsal side to the lighter ventral side.

Dorsal part of head a shade lighter than the back; between the eyes and the nose the coloration is as dark as the back and even a little darker (region of vibrissae). Chin-region the same colour as ventral side. Innerside of the limbs same coloration as ventral side. Dorsal side of hands and feet slightly lighter than dorsal region and often mingled with grayish white hairs.

Coloration of scales on the tail dark (on dry skins); hairs on dorsal side nearly black, on the ventral side lighter with here and there grayish white hairs.

— No indication of sexual dimorphism could be found.

Measurements of type and paratypes: see table I.

Discussion :

— This new species is undoubtedly a member of the short-tailed *Lophuromys*-group which includes, in the Congo-area, the species *flavopunctatus* and *sikapusi* (the taillength of *L. rahmi* reaches between 49,5 and 52,6 percent of the body-length).

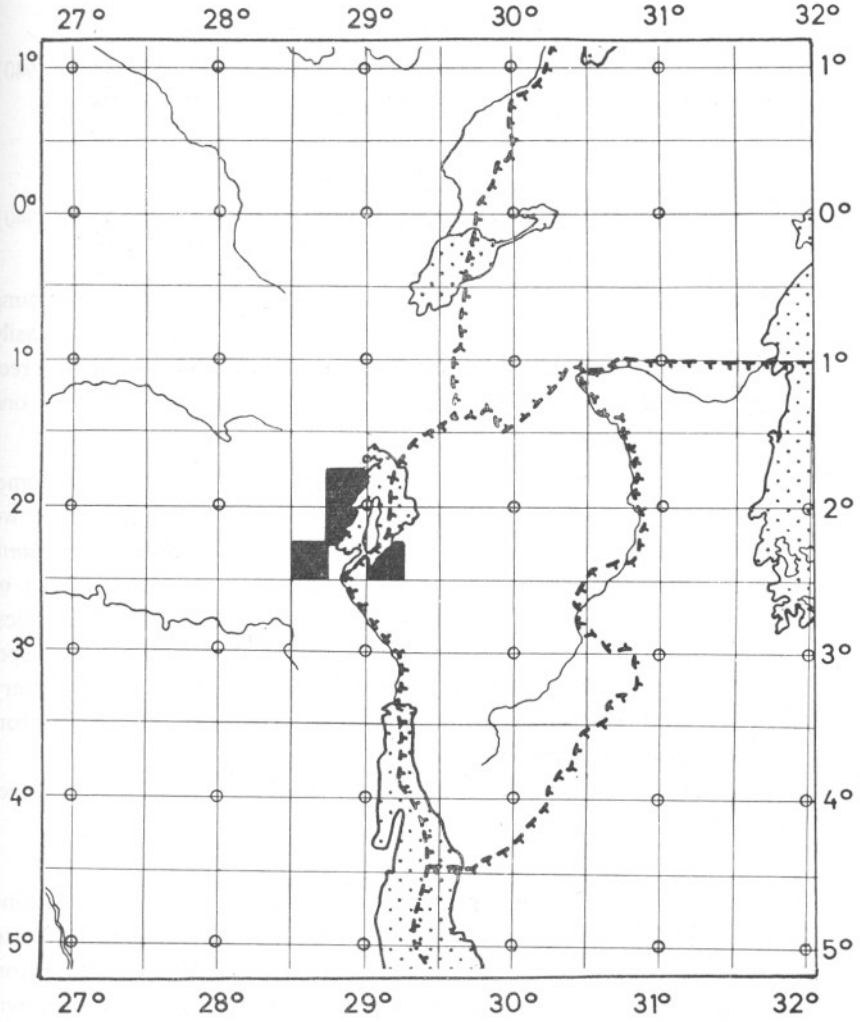

Fig. 2. — Geographical distribution of *Lophuromys rahmi* sp. nov.

But it is much smaller than *Lophuromys flavopunctatus* and *L. sikapusi*. This becomes especially clear when we consider the footlength (+ u):

Lophuromys rahmi 15,0-17,0 mm (4 ex.).
Lophuromys flavopunctatus 19,0-23,0 mm (37 ex.) (HATT 1940).
Lophuromys sikapusi 22,0-26,0 mm (5 ex.) (HATT 1940).

and the body-length:

Lophuromys rahmi 95-101 mm (4 ex.).
Lophuromys flavopunctatus 105-132 mm (37 ex.) (HATT 1940).
Lophuromys sikapusi 119-148 mm (5 ex.) (HATT 1940).

— If we add finally, that *L. rahmi* resembles quite closely to a young *L. sikapusi* when we consider skin-colour only, then it is easily understood, that there should be no difficulty in making a correct determination of any specimen of this new species, even if one does not dispose of a skull.

When we compare the minima and maxima of the craniometrical data of *Lophuromys rahmi* (see table II) to those we found for series of the Congo-species *luteogaster*, *woosnami*, *sikapusi* and *flavopunctatus*, we find that also with this set of characteristics it is extremely easy to recognize our new species. A comparison of the craniological features with the other species shows that *L. rahmi* is clearly different for 1° it's very short blunt rostrum and 2° it's relatively very broad interorbital region (see fig. 1).
In short, we can conclude that *L. rahmi* is a very distinct species that can very easily be recognized.

— All the actually known specimina of our new species (9 skins and 7 skulls) were captured in the neighbourhood of Lake Kivu. The map (fig. 2) gives an idea of this geographical distribution and as additional information we add a list with all the known localities and their geographical coördinates.

Biragorago	1°58′S; 28°56′E.
Bogamanda near Lemera	2°08′S; 28°49′E. (approx.).
Buhobera	2°07′S; 28°51′E.
Kamugondo near Mt Kahuzi	2°15′S; 28°41′E. (approx.),
Tshibati	2°14′S; 28°48′E.
Uinka	2°29′S; 29°12′E.

— A careful comparison of the tooth-pattern of *Lophuromys rahmi* with that of *L. flavopunctatus* and *L. sikapusi* of the Congo-area showed that *rahmi* is the most closely related to the latter species. This confirms the already noted fact of the close resemblance of their skin-characteristics.

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