



The peculiar looking creature that was found dead at a roadside in Pahang shares the same features and habits as rats but is not closely related to rodents.

It is called a moonrat

MYSTERY SOLVED: Wildlife Department sheds light on rat-like creature found dead by the roadside

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THE rat-like animal found dead on the side of a road last Wednesday was identified as a moonrat, locally known as *tikus ambang bulan*.

Moonrats, whose scientific name is *echinosorex gymurus*, are considered the only species in the echinosorex family.

Although it shares the same features and habits as rats, the moonrat is not closely related to rodents.

"They live in lowland forests throughout Malaysia and are also found in southern Thailand, Sumatra and Borneo," said the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (Perhilitan) in a statement yesterday.

The statement referred to an article published in the *New Straits Times* on Monday "Can anyone identify this animal" in *NST's* Letter to the Editor.

According to Perhilitan, moonrats were nocturnal animals which feed at night and were rarely seen in the day.

They are highly terrestrial and solitary

animals and prefer living in moist conditions, mostly under burrows, roots and logs. They only seek a companion during mating time.

In some countries, moonrats are kept as pets and they live up to five years.

The species is also famous for its extremely pungent smell, which has greater amount of ammonia content than other mammals and similar to the smell of rotten garlic. To mark territory, moonrats will release a strong secretion to distract its predators and rivals.

Small ants, earthworms and fruits are the primary components of its diet.

An article by *NST* reader Datuk Dr Looi Hoong Wah showed two pictures of the dead animal with white hair covering the frontal half of its black body.

Found on the side of the road, Dr Looi kept the carcass in a freezer with the intention of donating it to a museum.

Perhilitan has asked Dr Looi to contact the department's branch in Pahang at 09-5178111 or 09-5143000 or email at pakp@wildlife.gov.my so that they can pick up the animal for detailed identification and preservation as a zoological specimen.