Observations of Mountain Weasel *Mustela altaica* and Siberian Weasel *M. sibirica* in Nepal

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**Abstract**

Mountain Weasel *Mustela altaica* and Siberian Weasel *M. sibirica* were observed at localities new for the species, Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA) and Mugu district, respectively. These add to the few specific locality records for each species in Nepal.

*Keywords*: altitude, central Himalaya, distribution, Data Deficient, Near Threatened, threats

Five species of weasels *Mustela*, Stoat *M. erminea*, Siberian Weasel *M. sibirica*, Yellow-bellied Weasel *M. kathiah*, Mountain Weasel *M. altaica* and Stripe-backed Weasel *M. strigidorsa*, are reported to occur in Nepal (Baral & Shah 2008, Jnawali et al. 2011). However, the occurrence of Stripe-backed Weasel in Nepal was questioned by Abramov et al. (2008), whilst none of Mitchell (1975), IUCN (2012) or Thapa (in prep.) included Stoat as a member of the Nepal fauna. Even the other three species are known from relatively few authenticated localities in the country, and information about weasels from the entire Himalayan region is typically scarce. This note presents additional localities of Mountain and Siberian Weasels from the Nepal Himalaya.

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*Fig. 1.* Mountain Weasel *Mustela altaica*, Annapurna Conservation Area, Nepal, 17 August 2008 (Photo: Anand Chaudhary).

*Fig. 2.* Siberian Weasel *Mustela sibirica*, Mugu district, Nepal, 21 December 2012 (Photo: Anil Prajapati).
Weasels in Nepal

was sunny and the weasel came within 15 m of the observers, curiously peeping out from a fuel-wood pile outside a house about 100 m away from more natural habitat.

These two weasel species are recorded from only a few specific localities, including the present records, in Nepal. Therefore their national status is uncertain at present. Available records of both the species are shown on Fig. 3. Mountain Weasel has recently been recorded from Sagarmatha National Park and Kanchenjunga Conservation Area further east of Annapurna Conservation Area (Katuwal et al. 2013) and from Thadodhunga, Humla district (Ghimirey & Acharya in prep.) lying west from Annapurna Conservation Area. It was portrayed as occurring across the mountain region of Nepal by Jnawali et al. (2011), but no details were given of the sources for this, notably of the methods of detection and of verification, if any. This range should therefore be seen as hypothetical. It is categorised globally as Near Threatened on The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (IUCN 2012) while it is assessed as Data Deficient nationally (Jnawali et al. 2011). Potential threats in Nepal include depletion of prey base, habitat degradation and general disturbance through livestock and other anthropogenic activities (Jnawali et al. 2011).

Siberian Weasel has recently been recorded in Makalu-Barun National Park (Ghimirey & Acharya 2012) and Manaslu Conservation Area (Katuwal et al. 2013). It is considered a Least Concern species both nationally and globally (Jnawali et al. 2011, IUCN 2012). However information is not available on its population size and potential threats in the country (Jnawali et al. 2011). Therefore, its national status category might warrant further revision: Data Deficient might be appropriate.

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References


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Fig. 3. Records of Mountain Weasel Mustela altaica and of Siberian Weasel M. sibirica in Nepal.