

Photographic documentation of Ruddy Mongoose *Urva smithii* in West Bengal, India

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Abstract

Ruddy Mongoose *Urva smithii* was recorded from West Bengal, India, through camera-trapping and direct observation during a wildlife survey in the Ajodhya Hill, Purulia District. This is the first photographic evidence of the species's occurrence in West Bengal and is the easternmost global record for this species.

Keywords: Ajodhya Hill, camera-trapping, Purulia, West Bengal, Ruddy Mongoose

Introduction

Seven species of mongoose (Herpestidae) are present in India (Kamalakkannan and Venkatraman 2017). Out of the five mongoose species found in West Bengal, Ruddy Mongoose *Urva smithii* is the least known: there is only one sighting record from the state (Mallick 2019). A recent wildlife survey in the Ajodhya Hill, Purulia District, provided the first photographic evidence of this species from West Bengal. Ruddy Mongoose is placed under Schedule II of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 and is listed as of Least Concern in The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Mudappa & Choudhury 2016).

Survey area and methods

The survey was conducted at Ajodhya Hill, Purulia, West Bengal, between October 2018 and April 2019. The survey area (Fig. 1) is a dry deciduous forest with some moist patches and with a 2.8° to 52°C temperature range (Samanta *et al.* 2017). The annual average rainfall ranges from 1100 to 1500 mm (Das 2016).

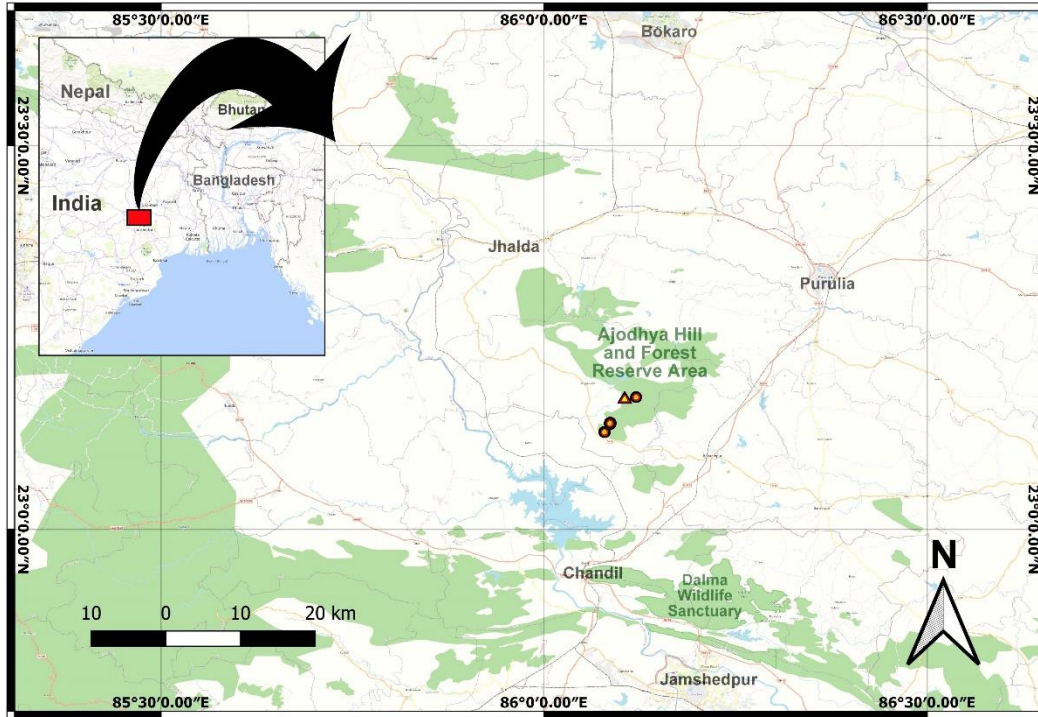


Fig. 1. Location of the camera-trapped (circles) and direct sightings of (triangle) Ruddy Mongoose *Urva smithii* in Ajudhya Hill, Purulia, West Bengal, India.

Six unbaited Moultrie M-50i camera-traps were set up for a total of 102 camera-trap days in order to assess the mammalian diversity of the area. The camera-traps were set up at various locations that were selected on the basis of secondary signs of animals. A Canon EOS 750D camera was used for photography by hand. A Garmin eTrex 20x was used to record location and altitude

Observations and discussion

Ruddy Mongoose were camera-trapped five times during the survey and directly observed on one occasion (Table 1). This is the first photographic evidence of the species's occurrence in West Bengal and is the easternmost global record for the species.

Table 1. Records of Ruddy Mongoose *Urva smithii* in Ajudhya Hill, Purulia, West Bengal, India.

Date	Time	Location	Record	Altitude	Forest type
2 Nov. 2018	15h17	23°10'N, 86°07'E	Camera-trapped	208 m	Mixed deciduous
26 Nov. 2018	09h34	23°10'N, 86°07'E	Camera-trapped	307 m	Mixed deciduous
19 Jan. 2019	13h56	23°10'N, 86°06'E	Camera-trapped	330 m	Dry hill stream
25 Jan. 2019	15h00	23°10'N, 86°06'E	Camera-trapped	330 m	Dry hill stream
9 Feb. 2019	10h44	23°08'N, 86°05'E	Camera-trapped	329 m	Dry deciduous
24 Feb. 2019	17h39	23°07'N, 86°04'E	Direct sighting	369 m	Dry deciduous



Fig. 2. A Ruddy Mongoose *Urva smithii* camera trapped in Ajodhya Hill, Purulia, West Bengal, India.
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Fig. 3. An adult Ruddy Mongoose *Urva smithii* photographed by hand in dry deciduous forest of Ajodhya Hill, Purulia. © Kirity Kumar.

Though similar to Grey Mongoose *Urva edwardsii*, the Ruddy Mongoose is readily identified in the field by its black tail tip, which is often held pointed upwards (Figs. 2, 3), and its reddish-brown colouration (Menon 2014).

The documented distribution of Ruddy Mongoose is restricted to Sri Lanka and Peninsular India, from south of Delhi in the north to Bihar in the east (Shreehari *et al.* 2013, Menon 2014, Mudappa & Choudhury 2016). Recently it was recorded in Rajasthan and Nepal (Dookia 2013, Subba *et al.* 2014). In West Bengal the only known record is a sighting record from the Turga Dam area, Purulia, in 2004 (Mallick 2019).

Other small carnivores encountered during this survey were Small Indian Mongoose *Urva auropunctatus*, Common Palm Civet *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus* and Small Indian Civet *Viverricula indica*.

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