

# First record of the Large-toothed Ferret Badger *Melogale personata* in Bangladesh

Md. Anwarul ISLAM<sup>1</sup>, Gawsia Wahidunnessa CHOWDHURY<sup>2</sup> and Jerrold L. BELANT<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

A Large-toothed Ferret Badger *Melogale personata* was captured alive in Maulvi Bazar district, northeastern Bangladesh, on 31 March 2008. Diagnosis was based on the large P4 which was about one-third the length of the upper cheek teeth with an outer concave edge and the upper P1 which was disproportionately small compared with upper P2. The known geographic range of this species includes eastern India, Nepal, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. This account represents the first record of the Large-toothed Ferret Badger in Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** distribution, geographic range, Maulvi Bazar District

সারসংক্ষেপ: বাংলাদেশের দক্ষিণপূর্বে অবস্থিত মৌলভীবাজার জেলায় মার্চ ৩১, ২০০৮ এ একটি ফেরেট ব্যাজা (*Melogale personata*) নামের স্তন্যপায়ী প্রাণী ধরা পড়েছে। এর ৪ নং পেষণ দাঁতটি দৈর্ঘ্যে উপরের পাটির দাঁতের এক তৃতীয়াংশ। উপরের পাটির ১ নং পেষণ দাঁতটি ২নং দাঁতের চাইতে অসামঞ্জস্যপূর্ণভাবে ছোট। প্রাণীটির বিস্তৃতি ইতোপূর্বে ভারত, লাওস, মায়ানমার, থাইল্যান্ড ও ভিয়েতনামে উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে। এ প্রবন্ধে বাংলাদেশে 'বড়-দাঁত ফেরেট ব্যাজা' প্রাপ্তি নিশ্চিত করা হলো।

মূলশব্দ: বিস্তৃতি, ভৌগলিক সীমানা, মৌলভীবাজার জেলা

Also known as the Burmese Ferret Badger or Tree Badger, the Large-toothed Ferret Badger *Melogale personata* (Mustelidae) has been confirmed to occur in India, Nepal, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam (O'Donel 1917, Hinton & Fry 1923, Osgood 1932, Pocock 1941). Extreme southern China and Peninsular Malaysia have been included in its geographic distribution (Hussain 1999, Wozencraft 2005), but these authors did not provide specific information on which this was based. Field guides and checklists of mammalian fauna in Bangladesh did not include the Large-toothed Ferret Badger (Khan 1985, Ghazi *et al.* 2006), and we are unaware of any records from the country.

A male Large-toothed Ferret Badger was captured in a tea garden by local labourers, who hunt animals for food, at the Sirajnagar Tea Garden of Maulvi Bazar district in northeastern Bangladesh on 31 March 2008 (Fig. 1). The Sirajnagar Tea Garden is about 20 km northeast of Maulvi Bazar district town, near the In-

dian states of Assam (about 30 km NE) and Tripura (about 20 km east). Maulvi Bazar itself lies at 24°15'N, 91°53'E. The animal is presently kept in a private zoo of Mr Sitesh Ranjan Dev of Sreemangal town, about 35 km southwest of the capture location.

This animal was originally presumed to be a Small-toothed (or Chinese) Ferret Badger *M. moschata*, based on an earlier photograph and the reported distribution of this species in the border area with India. On further inspection, we concluded the specimen was *M. personata*. Diagnosis of this individual was based on the large P4 which was about one-third the length of the upper cheek teeth with a concave outer edge. In addition, upper P1 was disproportionately small compared with P2 (Fig.2). In contrast, Small-toothed Ferret Badger, which overlaps broadly in distribution with Large-toothed Ferret Badger (e.g. Pocock 1941), possesses a P4 about one-quarter the length of the molariformes with a slightly concave outer and a P1 that is only slightly smaller than



Fig. 1. Large-toothed Ferret Badger, Maulvi Bazar district, Bangladesh, 2008.



Fig. 2. Dentition of Large-toothed Ferret Badger showing large P4 with concave outer edge and disproportionately small P1 relative to P2, Maulvi Bazar district, Bangladesh, 2008.

P2 (Pocock 1941, Storz & Wozencraft 1999).

This Large-toothed Ferret Badger was estimated to weigh 2 kg. Total length of this individual was 51 cm (20 inches), with a body length of 33 cm (13 inches) and tail length of 18 cm (7 inches). Overall height was 20 cm (8 inches). Pocock (1941) reported a weight of 1.7 kg (3.75 pounds) for a female. Males are reportedly slightly larger than females and may exceed a weight of 1.8 kg (4 pounds; Long & Killingley 1983). Total lengths of four Large-toothed Ferret Badgers (two female, two male) ranged from 55 to 63 cm (21.5–24.7 inches); tail lengths ranged from 18 to 23 cm (7.0–9.2 inches; Pocock 1941).

There are several reports of the Large-toothed Ferret Badger from India near Bangladesh. Menon (2003), based on unspecified sources, mapped its distribution in northeast India to include Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and Assam. Jha (1999) reported it, without primary detail, in Sikkim. Two specimens and one sighting are reported from Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, India (O'Donel 1917, Agrawal et al. 1992, Chakraborty & Bhattacharyya 1999). It is reported sympatric with the Small-toothed Ferret Badger in northeast India (Pocock 1941, Long & Killingley 1983).

The 3rd Schedule of the Bangladesh Wildlife (Preservation) (Amendment) Act of 1974 includes animals (e.g. Hog Badger *Arctonyx collaris*) which shall not be hunted, killed or captured. However, as Large-toothed Ferret Badger was not previously known for Bangladesh, it is not included in this Act. In India, it is listed in Schedule 1, Part 1, of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 (WPSI 2002). It is not listed by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES 2008) and the IUCN Red List presently describes this species as Least Concern, meaning this species is not globally threatened or near threatened (IUCN 2007). This classification is under review, given the rather few recent records of verifiable identity from throughout its range.

This record of the Large-toothed Ferret Badger increases the number of mammal species recorded in Bangladesh to 114 (see Islam et al. 2000). The several reports of this species in areas surrounding Bangladesh suggests that it may have a greater distribution and presence in this country than currently known. Additional surveys and documentation of the Large-toothed Ferret Badger, and small carnivores in general, in Bangladesh are necessary to understand the distribution and status of this species.

### Acknowledgements

We extend our thanks to Mr Bishwajwati Chowdhury, a journalist with the Daily Prothom Alo, Sreemangal, for informing us of the capture of the Large-toothed Ferret Badger. We also thank Mr Sitesh Ranjan Dev, Sreemangal, for allowing us to observe and measure this individual.

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<sup>1</sup>Department of Zoology, University of Dhaka, Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh; and Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh.

Email: anwar1955@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Department of Fisheries and Marine Science, Noakhali Science and Technology University, Sonapur, Maizdi, Noakhali 3802, Bangladesh; and Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh

<sup>3</sup>Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Mississippi State University, Box 9690, Mississippi State, Mississippi, USA.