

Sightings of Javan Ferret Badger *Melogale orientalis*

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The Javan Ferret Badger *Melogale orientalis* is endemic to the islands of Java and Bali (Riffel 1991), where it is the sole representative of the purely Asian genus *Melogale*. Its endemic status and the low proportion of Java that retains natural habitat led the most recent global conservation action plan for small carnivores (Schreiber *et al.* 1989) to consider the species as “known or likely to be threatened”. In the action plan, the species’s relatively high conservation priority ranking, combined with the sympatry of several other small carnivore taxa endemic to Java or the Greater Sundas and also, presumably threatened, led to the action plan declaring ‘Java’ as one of the seven core areas for priority action for mustelid and viverrid conservation. Yet despite this, Javan Ferret Badger remains rather little known; indeed, Riffel (1991) stated that the species “is virtually unknown with respect to its ecology and conservation status”. There seem to be very few published recent records since Riffel’s (1991) review. Hence, I document two sightings from Gunung Gede National Park, West Java, Indonesia, on 16 October 2006. In the first, I saw two animals together, in thick undergrowth around 5 m from a raised section of the main tourist trail, at about 17h45 (dusk; half-an-hour before dark). They scuttled away quietly when approached. Next, one was seen alone, again in thick undergrowth, about 2 m from the trail at about 18h15 (just as it was getting dark), which also scuttled away. Both locations lie at about 1,700 m altitude, in primary montane forest about 2 and 3 km interior from the forest edge.

The trail carries many visitors on most weekends. Often lots of litter is dropped, especially in the location of the second

record, which lies near a waterfall that is the attraction of many people’s visit. The day of observation fell, however, in the third weekend in Ramadan and the place was completely devoid of other people.

In Gunung Gede National Park, Sunda Stink Badgers *Mydaus javanensis* regularly raid bags of campers (including my own personal experience) and there are also regular reports of ferret badgers from this area, typically contained within informally circulated ‘trip reports’ and notes of visiting birdwatchers. Schreiber *et al.* (1989) gave the priority conservation action for this species to be the generation of further information on its status. So, even though Gunung Gede is a historical site for the species, with three specimens collected in 1970 (Riffel 1991), it may be useful to record continued presence. Many more records are needed before the species’s conservation status can be authoritatively assessed.

References

- Riffel, M. 1991. An update on the Javan Ferret-Badger *Melogale orientalis* (Horsfield 1821). *Small Carnivore Conservation* 5: 2–3.
- Schreiber, A., Wirth, R., Riffel, M. & Van Rompaey, H. 1989. *Weasels, civets, mongooses and their relatives: an action plan for the conservation of mustelids and viverrids*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.

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