

Sighting of Spotted Linsang *Prionodon pardicolor* at Nameri Tiger Reserve, Assam, India

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Abstract

A rarely recorded small carnivore, Spotted Linsang *Prionodon pardicolor* is found throughout much of south-eastern Asia. I report here the sighting of a Spotted Linsang in daytime at Nameri Tiger Reserve, Assam, India. Further research and surveys are needed to ascertain its status and distribution, particularly in the western part of its range in India.

Keywords: day-time activity, distribution record, habitat, North-east India, small carnivore

নামেৰি স্পটেড লিনচাঙ্গ (Spotted Linsang) প্ৰত্যক্ষ দৰ্শন

সাৰাংশ : স্পটেড লিনচাঙ্গ (Spotted Linsang) এবিধ অতি বিৰল আৰু সৰু আকাৰৰ মাংসভোজী জন্তু। ইহতক সমগ্ৰ দক্ষিণ পূব এচিয়াত পোৱা যায়। মই উক্ত জন্তু বিধ নামেৰি ৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় উদ্যানত কৰ্মৰত অৱস্থাত দিনৰ ভাগত দেখা পাইছিলো আৰু প্ৰতিবেদন দাখিল কৰিছো। নামেৰি ৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় উদ্যানত এই জন্তু বিধৰ প্ৰকৃত অৱস্থিতি আৰু বিচৰণৰ তথ্য আহৰণৰ বাবে অধিক অধ্যয়নৰ প্ৰয়োজন আছে।

মূলশব্দ : মাংসভোজী, লিনচাঙ্গ (Linsang), উত্তৰপূব ভাৰত

The Spotted Linsang *Prionodon pardicolor* is found throughout much of south-eastern Asia, including Nepal, India, Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Vietnam and China (Van Rompaey 1995, Zhang *et al.* 1997, Walston 2001, Holden & Neang 2009, Duckworth *et al.* in prep.). It has been recorded in lowland, hill and mountain forest, bamboo forest, secondary growth, dense grassland and along rivers (Sunquist 1982, Pham 1992, Van Rompaey 1995, Tizard 2002). It is partly arboreal and preys mostly on small vertebrates (Lekagul & McNeely 1977, Van Rompaey 1995). Historical and recent records from across the species range are collated in Duckworth *et al.* (in prep.).

North-east India, comprising the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Tripura is one of the biodiversity hotspots of the world (Myers 1988, 1991) and forms part of a rich bio-geographic unit. Seven species of civet and linsang have been reported from the region (Choudhury 1999) and Spotted Linsang is among those sighted least often.

Nameri Tiger Reserve (TR), Assam, India (26°50'–27°02'N, 92°38'–93°00'E), nestled at the foothills of Eastern Himalayas, is located along the north bank of the Brahmaputra River in the district of Sonitpur and covers an area of 200 km². Nameri TR contains Eastern alluvial secondary semi-evergreen forest, low alluvial savannah woodland, Eastern *Dillenia* swamp forest and wet bamboo forest, with areas of cane brakes formed by *Calamus tenuis* (Champion & Seth 1968).

As a part of the collaborative study on monitoring Tiger *Panthera tigris* and other associated species by WWF-India's North Bank Landscape Conservation Programme and the Assam Forest Department, I sighted a Spotted Linsang on 1 February 2010 at 11h34, when I was traversing on an Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus* to set a camera trap. The animal was sitting on the ground under an *Albizia procera* tree. As soon as it heard our presence it rushed off to nearby *Erianthus* grasslands and disappeared. The

sighting lasted about 8–10 seconds. The distinct dark patches on its coat were quite clear and unmistakable. I saw the short animal with its slender body, pointed head and small limbs. The tail was long and fluffy and had many alternating dark and pale (white or cream) rings. The head was not seen clearly.

The animal was in Assam Valley Tropical Evergreen Forest with narrow strips of open grassland, at 26°55'24.2"N, 92°49'46.4"E, at an altitude of 80 m a.s.l. The precise spot was a leaf-littered forest floor, covered mostly with *Albizia lucida* and *A. procera*, other trees mainly comprising *Terminalia myriocarpa*, *Bombax ceiba* and *Dillenia indica*.

Spotted Linsang occurs in dense moist tropical forests, but has also been observed in drier areas (Sunquist 1982). It is usually active at night, although daytime sightings have been recorded before (e.g. Long & Minh 2006). The species was previously feared to be threatened by habitat loss and degradation, hunting and trade across much of its range (Schreiber *et al.* 1989), but, although the impacts of these factors on populations are largely unknown, the relatively large number of records from small, degraded, and heavily hunted areas of at least Lao PDR and China (Lau *et al.* 2010, Duckworth *et al.* in prep.) indicate that the species is actually rather resilient. Further research is necessary to understand better the status, distribution and behaviour of this enigmatic animal, particularly in the Indian part of its range.

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1ST BORNEO CARNIVORE SYMPOSIUM

Borneo Carnivore Symposium:

Road Towards
Conservation
Action Plans

1st Borneo Carnivore Symposium to be held in Malaysia in June 2011

With 25 species, Borneo harbours a diverse carnivore community. The distribution of several species is restricted to this island and Borneo is a priority area for carnivore conservation. At the same time, the destruction of Borneo’s forest habitat due to timber extraction, oil palm plantations, and mining continues. As a consequence, 11 of Borneo’s carnivores are listed on *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. Information on the conservation status and distribution of Borneo’s carnivores is fundamental for the development of conservation strategies. However, existing information about these aspects is very limited and dispersed across many countries and institutions.

To advance the conservation of Borneo’s carnivores, the Sabah Wildlife Department, the IUCN/SSC Small Carnivore Specialist Group, Cat Specialist Group and Otter Specialist Group, and the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research will organise the *1st Borneo Carnivore Symposium – Road towards conservation action plans*. The symposium will take place from 18 to 24 of June 2011 in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, and bring together researchers, governmental authorities and local stakeholders from the three range countries of Borneo, to discuss the status and conservation needs of this threatened group of mammals. The event aims to synthesise our current state of knowledge on Borneo’s carnivores and to identify priority sites and issues for their conservation.

So far, the event is being sponsored by the Nashville Zoo, Houston Zoo, Mississippi State University - College for Forest Resources, WWF-Germany, Clouded Leopard Project, Shared Earth Foundation, British Ecological Society, and the Chester Zoo.

For more information about the event or to register, please visit the symposium website at <http://www.fwrc.msstate.edu/borneocarnivoresymposium>. For further enquiries about the symposium, feel free to contact us at bc2011@izw-berlin.de



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