

## First photographic record of Binturong *Arctictis binturong* in Buxa Tiger Reserve, West Bengal, India

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### Abstract.

Binturong *Arctictis binturong* was first reported from two locations in Buxa Tiger Reserve. It was first camera-trapped in the East Himalayan Subtropical Wet Hill forest of Phaskhawa block (Bhutiabasti Beat, Jainti Range) in 2015. An adult male binturong, which strayed out of the eastern sub-montane semi-evergreen forest of Bhutanghat block (Mainabari Beat, North Rydak Range) into a village (West Khalisamari) near Narathali forests under South Rydak Range, was also rescued by cage-trapping and released in its natural habitat at Bhutanghat- 2 compartment near a water source.

*Keywords:* Hill forests, camera-trap, straying, rescue, rehabilitation.

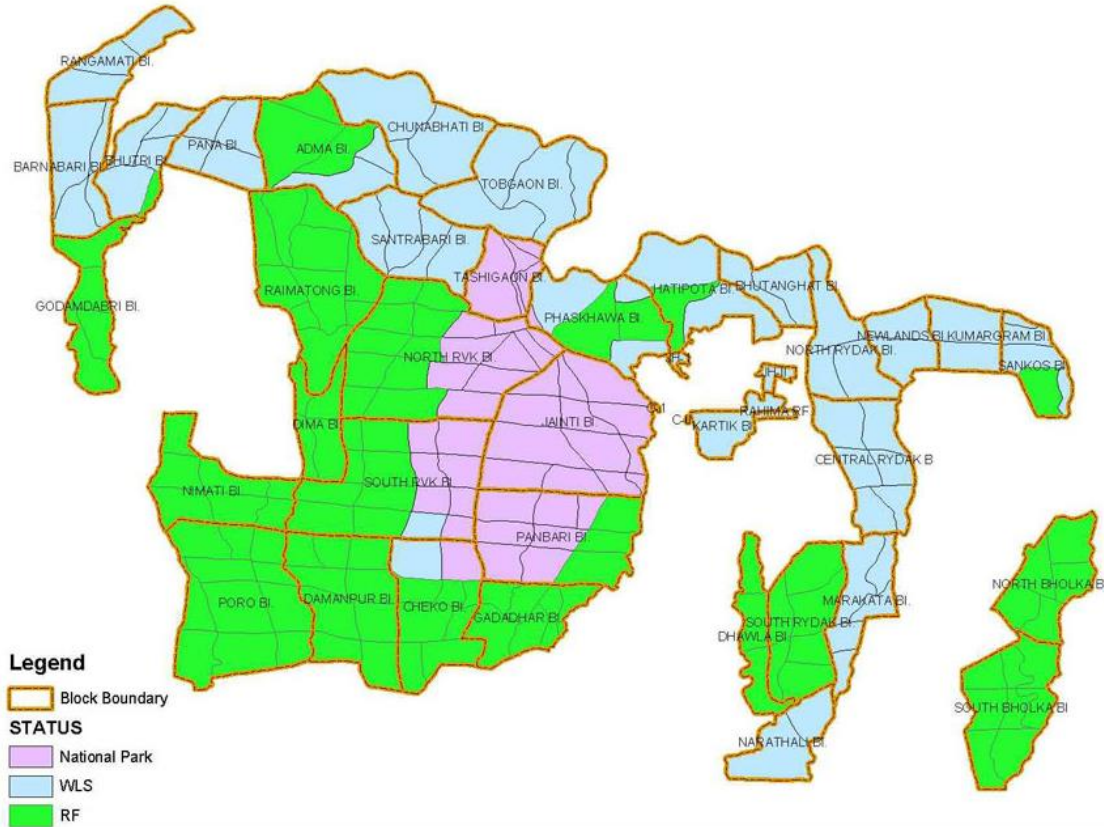
Within the Indian limits, Binturong *Arctictis binturong*, a Vulnerable (Willcox *et al.* 2016), sparsely distributed and rarely sighted species, is known from all the states of North-east, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, West Bengal (northern parts), Sikkim and Tripura (Choudhury 2013). Earlier, Choudhury (1999) observed that its records from Sikkim and Bhutan suggest that small numbers do occur in the adjacent areas of Neora Valley National Park and also, perhaps, Buxa Tiger Reserve (BTR) in northern Bengal. However, to date, there are no sighting records of this species in northern Bengal prior to the present study (2015) in BTR.

A Binturong was sighted in the moderately dense lower hill forests (Sachaphu forests of Buxa Hills in Sinchula Range) up to an altitude of 650 m under East Division, BTR. First, 100 pairs of automatic trap cameras were set up in the remote sensitive locations of the East Division of BTR (Figure 1). The camera-traps captured the animal at two places in the East Himalayan Subtropical Wet Hill forest (8B/CI) of Phaskhawa block, but the nocturnal images were quite hazy.

Thereafter, on 23 December 2015, a rescue team cage-trapped an adult male binturong that strayed into a fringe village (West Khalisamari) of South Rydak Range (Figure 2) and released it next day morning in its natural habitat of the Eastern Sub-

montane semi-evergreen forest (2B/C1b) in Bhutanghat block under Mainabari Beat of North Rydak Range, BTR (Figure 3).

More scientific investigations including monitoring the habitats of Binturong in the entire Buxa hills are necessary to ensure conservation and survival of this very rare species.



**Figure 1.** Map of Protected Areas in Buxa Tiger Reserve, Northern Bengal.



**Figure 2.** Binturong *Arctictis binturong* trapped at Paschim Khalisamari village, Northern Bengal.



**Figure 3.** Binturong *Arctictis binturong* released in Bhutanghat block under Mainabari Beat of North Rydak Range, BTR.

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