

Further observations of Small-toothed Palm Civet *Arctogalidia trivirgata* in Namdapha National Park, Arunachal Pradesh, India

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Abstract

There are few records of Small-toothed Palm Civet *Arctogalidia trivirgata* from India. Two recent records from Namdapha National Park, Changlang district, Arunachal Pradesh, are only the third and fifth recent records from India: a group filmed on 12 November 2012, and a single photographed on 10 March 2014.

Keywords: *Canarium strictum*, *Neolamarckia cadamba*, rarity, sighting, Three-striped Palm Civet

Small-toothed Palm Civet *Arctogalidia trivirgata* is a nocturnal, arboreal small carnivore distributed in India's North-eastern states, Yunnan (China), mainland SE Asia, Sumatra, Borneo and western Java (Corbet & Hill 1992). In India, there are very few records. A specimen was collected at Mokokchung in the Naga Hills (Nagaland) at 5,000 ft on 5 September 1919 (Wroughton 1921, Mills 1923). The origin of an 1856 specimen from Darjeeling, West Bengal (Sclater 1891, who located it in Sikkim) was queried by Choudhury (2013) because the site lies far from the known range. Sterndale (1884) indicated occurrence in 'Assam', an area then much larger than the present-day state, but gave no localities. A record from Sylhet (no precise locality; Blanford 1888–1891, Mills 1923, Pocock 1939) might also be from India, although most of this area is in present-day Bangladesh. The species has been said to occur, apparently based on second-hand reports, in hills and foothills to the south of the river Brahmaputra in Assam (Choudhury 1997a) supported by one village captive in Dibrugarh district in 1994 (A. U. Choudhury verbally to Kakati & Srikant 2014); in eastern Arunachal Pradesh, especially in the districts of Tirap, Changlang, Lohit and perhaps Dibang Valley (Choudhury 1997b); and in Manipur (Choudhury 2000), Mizoram and Tripura (Choudhury 2013). Apparently the only other published records from India are from Namdapha National Park, Changlang district, Arunachal Pradesh, in December 2009 (Naniwadekar *et al.* 2013), from Balpakram National Park, Meghalaya, in April 2013 (Choudhury 2013, Kakati & Srikant 2014), and from Dampa Tiger Reserve, Mizoram, in March 2014 (Raman & Zakhuma 2014).

On 12 November 2012, a group of four Small-toothed Palm Civets was recorded near the 'Hornbill Camp' at 27°32'14"N, 96°26'53"E (datum WGS84; recorded altitude 647 m) in Namdapha Tiger Reserve at 21h50 during research on flying squirrels. The civets were in a *Neolamarckia cadamba* tree at a height of 16.3 m (measured using a Bosch Laser distance measurer). During 10 minutes' observation (over some of which they were filmed; the resulting images are not of sufficient quality for printing here), the animals seemed undisturbed by the strong (6 V) yellow lights. They moved over tree branches, then slowly three individuals disappeared into dense canopy. One individual stared, motionless, at the spotlight for nearly five minutes, then also moved into the canopy. The forest guard and a villager who shared the observation said that they did not previously know of the presence of such a species. When the video was shown to three forest officials and four forest guards, they too expressed their ignorance

towards the presence of this species in the park. This might reflect the nocturnal and arboreal nature of the species (see Duckworth & Nettelbeck 2008), and that most patrolling by the forest guards happens by day. Our point of sighting was about 1 km away (aerial distance) from the sighting of Naniwadekar *et al.* (2013). The animals observed, initially taken to be giant flying squirrels *Petaurista*, fitted the description in Naniwadekar *et al.* (2013) with no obvious differences.

On 10 March 2014 CB watched and photographed a solitary Small-toothed Palm Civet at 27°33'N, 96°29'E (within 700–800 m asl), approximately 1 km from the Rani Jheel area of Namdapha National Park, at 21h47 (Fig. 1). This point of



Fig. 1. Small-toothed Palm Civet *Arctogalidia trivirgata* in a *Canarium strictum* tree, near Rani Jheel, Namdapha National Park, India, on 10 March 2014 (Photo: Chewang Bonpo).

observation lies about 4.15 km straight-line distance from the November 2012 observation, and 5.15 km from the sighting of Naniwadekar *et al.* (2013). This Small-toothed Palm Civet was moving in a *Canarium strictum* tree at a height of 7 m from the ground.

Namdapha National Park is profiled in Ghosh (1987), Proctor *et al.* (1998), Datta *et al.* (2003) and Nath *et al.* (2005). During regular observations there since August 2011, KCM and AK observed Small-toothed Palm Civet only this once, despite about 160 hours of spotlighting research on flying squirrels. This covered 26 km of trails within a 110 km² part of the park's total 1,985 km². This suggests that Small-toothed Palm Civet could be rare in the surveyed part of the park. Naniwadekar *et al.* (2013) wondered if the rarity of the species's records in the park merely reflected the limited spotlighting to date. Because only a very small proportion of the park has yet been surveyed by spotlighting, nothing can be concluded about its abundance in the park as of now.

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