

Sighting of Himalayan Palm Civet *Paguma larvata* in the main city of Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India

Zaara Kidwai*

Himalayan Palm Civet, belonging to the family Viverridae is a civet species native to the Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia (Duckworth *et.al.* 2008).

The average length of head and body of a Himalayan palm civet is about 60 cm which is almost equal to the size of its tail. The civet weigh around 3.6-5.0 kg (Prater, 1948). The animal is distinguished from other Indian civets by its white whiskers and by the absence of any trace of spots or stripes on its body. Its coat color ranges from uniform grey to tawny with white under-parts. Facial markings include usually a white band on the forehead and nose and another beneath the ears passing over the cheeks with blotches below the eyes (Prater, 1948).

Himalayan palm civet is distributed from China, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Peninsular Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar to northern India including western, central and eastern Himalayas, Kashmir and Assam hill ranges (Prater, 1948; Duckworth *et.al.* 2008). They are also found on Borneo, Sumatra, Taiwan, and the Andaman and Nicobar islands (Duckworth *et.al.* 2008). They have been recorded in both evergreen and deciduous forest, and in disturbed habitat (Grassman, 1998; Azlan, 2003; Duckworth 2008; Robertson pers. comm.).

This species is listed as "Least Concern" due to its wide distribution, presumed large population, occurrence in many protected areas, tolerance to some degree of habitat modification, and because it is unlikely to be declining at nearly the rate required to qualify for listing in a threatened category. The major threats for the masked palm civet are continued habitat destruction and hunting for bushmeat. However, it can also live in fragmented forest habitats, albeit at reduced density, and its semi-arboreal lifestyle makes it less vulnerable to hunting than ground-dwelling carnivores (Duckworth *et. al.* 2008).

On 8th November 2013, the author received a phone call stating that a red panda is spotted in the main city around Shahastradhara Road, Dehradun. As a proof, he sent over a picture to the author to verify the species. After careful identification, it was found to be a Himalayan Palm Civet. Accordingly, the author visited the area of its sighting to confirm the presence of the animal in that area. It was observed that the animal is residing in a small Eucalyptus patch around the Rajeshwar nagar of Shahastradhara Road in Dehradun City (30° 21' 11.80" N, 78° 03'52.53" E). The patch was behind a Punjab National Bank office and apparently was spotted by many residents of that area.

It is an uncommon sighting in that area, even though the author couldn't get a clear look of the animal, the inquiry about that animal in the surrounding area



Himalayan palm civet in Eucalyptus Patch. Photo credit Alistair Lethorn

confirmed that the civet is indeed residing in that patch for quite a while now and it may have been nesting there.

According to the residents, the animal was not at all bothering the surrounding habitations and people were quite tolerant to its presence. The animal has not again been sighted since by the author in the area and it is assumed that the animal found its way back to where it came from. Since it was the first sighting of Himalayan palm civet by WWF team in the area, this information of sighting of the civet cat hopes to help update its present distribution in Uttarakhand.

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*WWF-India, Dehradun Programme Office, Dehradun, Uttarakhand. Email: zaarakidwai@gmail.com