The Chital *Axis axis* is a medium sized deer belonging to the family Cervidae and a native species to India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan (Prater 1934; Schaller 1967). The species thrive in a variety of habitats, but avoid extremes such as dense moist (evergreen) forests and open semi-desert or desert. Moist and dry deciduous forest areas, especially adjoining dry thorn scrub or grasslands, appear to be optimal, and highest densities of Chital are reported from these habitats. Short grasslands of the terai, swampy meadows and glades adjoining forest areas, coastal dry evergreen forests, mixed forests or plantations with Teak *Tectona grandis* and Sal *Shorea robusta* are also used, and indeed over much of northern and southern India, its distribution closely matches

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**CHITAL**

Unusual sighting of *Axis axis* in higher elevations in Nilgiris District, Tamil Nadu

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**Mammalia**
[Class of Mammals]

**Cetartiodactyla**
[Order of even-toed ungulates and cetaceans]

**Cervidae**
[Family of Deer]

**Axis axis**
[Chital]

Species described by Erxleben in 1777
that of Sal and Teak, respectively (Raman 2013).

The Nilgiris is a major part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. The Nilgiris is situated (11°12’–11°43’N & 76°14–77°01’E) in the north western corner of Tamil Nadu in southern India. They are bounded on the North by the State of Karnataka and in the west and southwest by Kerala and east and south by Coimbatore District of Tamil Nadu. The Nilgiris occupies a total area of 2542sq. km and the elevation of the Nilgiris ranges from 300 to about 2,700m. Nilgiris, as the most forested district of the state, signifies an important stretch of Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu and is the junction of the Western and Eastern Ghats. The peak of Doddabetta is the highest elevation in Nilgiris with an altitude of 2,637m.

On 6 December 2017 17.00hr, we observed a herd of three Chitals consisted of one male and two females, feeding on tip of Common Gorse Ulex europaeus in eucalyptus plantation near Marlimund Lake (11.25460 N & 76.41497 E, elevation 2,209m), Udhagai North Range, Nilgiris Forest Division in Nilgiris. When it moved away from vegetation undergrowth, we noted the golden-rufous body with a covering of white spots. As we photographed the herd with Cannon 700D with 55–250 mm zoom lens, we were able identify them in the images as Chital. Generally, Chital is a lower elevation species but rarely seen above the elevation of 1,160m (Schaller 1967). Krishnan (1972) reported that Chital is particularly frequent in grassland–forest interface, edge, and other ecotones. Although several observers have noted that Chital occurs mostly in flat areas and avoids hills and slopes (Schaller 1967; Khan 1996), this may not hold in areas where preferred habitats or forage is also available on slopes (Raman 2013; Kumar 2010). Johnsingh et al. (2004) stated that it occurs in both hilly and flatter terrain, mainly the latter, in the Terai Arc Landscape of India. Raman (1996) observed that habitat use varies seasonally, reflecting food availability. Chital uses more wooded habitat during the cool-dry season and early summer (November to May), where fallen fruit, leaf litter, and browse are available. The present record envisages that the occurrences Chital in higher elevation due to foraging and avoid the predators in upper Nilgiris in winter season.

References
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Corrigendum


In the article 3rd para, read as “The present communication reports first ever scientific evidence of chital on 17 June 2017 at 04:47hr. The similar reports have been made recently by the Forest Department” instead of “The present scientific communication reports about evidence of chital (adult & sub-adult) on 17 June 2017 at 04:47hr. As reported by the Field Director, Manas, the first photographic evidence was recorded in the park by front-line staff with the help of Aaranyak, an NGO in Panbari Range in 2016 and it was reported in The Telegraph first by Mr. Roopak Goswami (Jan.17, 2017).