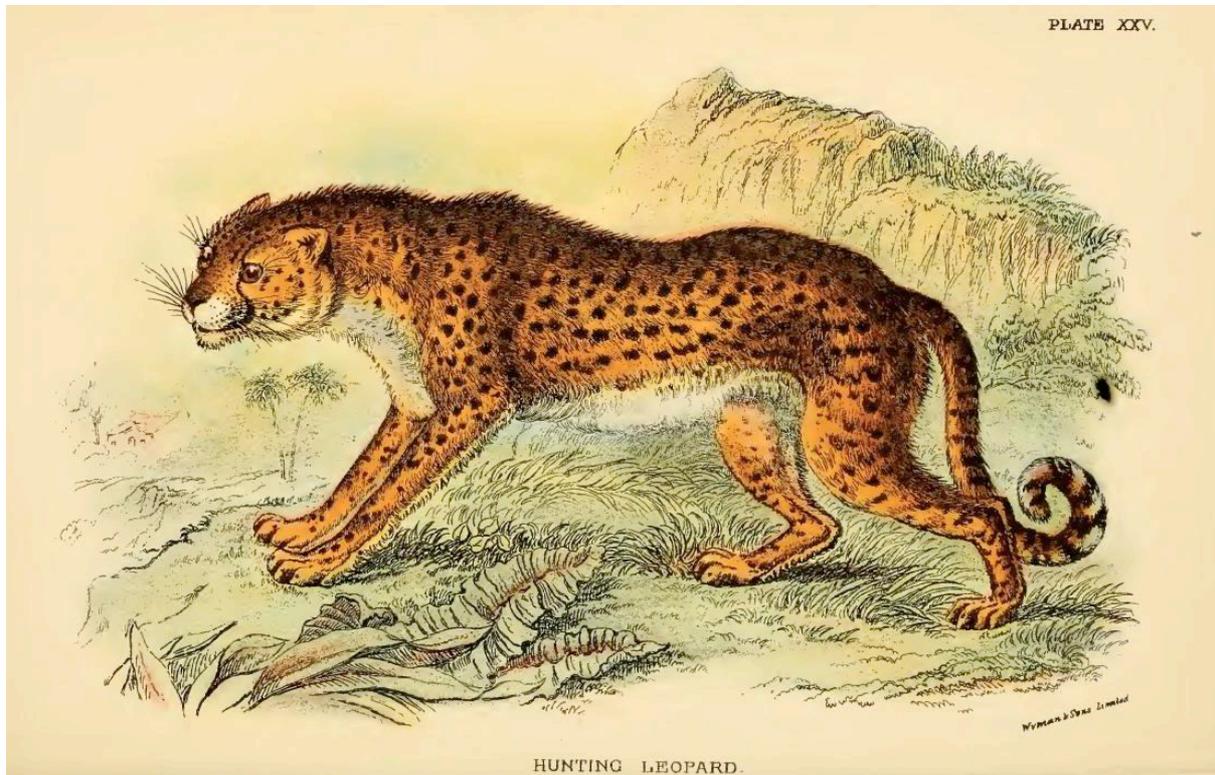


## APPENDICES

### Appendix I – Cheetahs in West Bengal! : Asiatic Cheetah's Historical Range Extended?



Richard Lydekker's sketch of a Cheetah from his book *A Handbook To The Carnivora*, Lloyd's Natural History, 1896

While researching for new Cheetah-references for what today is the state of Jharkhand, I came across something rather odd. As I was going through various sporting and shikar books by authors of yore, I randomly picked up a book titled *Reminiscences of Twenty Years' Pigsticking in Bengal*. Published in 1893, the author was "Raoul" who worked in one "Gaureepore Factory, Murshidabad". Prior to this one, I had gone through another book on *pigsticking*, and knew that these books contained nothing apart from the *hog* (wild boar) and intricacies of this sport. So I knew this book would be of no use either for my Cheetah research or even for a general account of the wildlife of the region. But still, I aimlessly started flipping the pages, and the first few hundred pages were a repeat of my previous experience – it had nothing in it except Wild Boar, the landscape and the author's varied experiences spearing them while trying to perfect his *pigsticking* skills. As I was about to close the book, I decided that having come so far, I should maybe glance through the last chapter of the book titled "Miscellaneous" as well. And lo! There it was -- a Cheetah reference! Who would have imagined that tucked in the pages of the most vague chapter of this rather useless (wildlife history-wise) book, was as I would later find out, a very precious Cheetah reference. In the second paragraph on Page 153, *Chapter XVII – Miscellaneous*, Raoul had written:

"Of panthers or leopards in Bengal proper, where also pigs abound, there are three varieties to be found, including the cheetah (*Felis jubata*). This latter seems very rare, and I have come only across one, which had been killed by some of the MODOOPORE villagers in 1874." (Raoul 1893).

Now, the task at hand was to find out the location of this "Modoopore village". I immediately guessed that this "Modoopore" was the anglicized version of "Madhupur". But then, there were dozens of villages/towns named Madhupur strewn across Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal. A quick search on the net yielded the apparent result – Madhupur is a small town in Deoghar District of Jharkhand! And that immediately rung a bell, Cheetahs occurred in Deoghar as I've already narrated above and this Madhupur is a small town in Deoghar district. Quite obviously, it would have been a village about 130 years ago. Everything was adding up perfectly, and so it apparently seemed that the mystery had been solved. But I still wasn't convinced, and decided to search for other references to this "Modoopore Village" in the book. And once I went through the few other references to the village in the book, holes started getting driven into my earlier theory of the village's location. In a chapter titled *Modopore "Null" Meet*, the author had written:

"Modoopore is one of the Patkabari Concern's out-work or factory, and owned by that Prince of Bengal pig-stickers, Archie Hills.....To the east of the preserve, and about half a mile or so away, lies the river Jellinghee," (Raoul 1893).

And immediately my earlier conclusion of the village being the present-day town of Madhupur was shot down, for there was no river by the name of "Jellinghee" anywhere near Deoghar's Madhupur. So, I was back to square one and the search for Madhupur or *Modoopore* began again. The three key words in the above text were --- 'Patkabari', 'Archie Hills' and the river 'Jellinghee'. I started scouring the net to get more info on these three simultaneously. And after a painstaking few hours long search, I finally zeroed in on the location of the village with confidence. Apart from a number of cross checks to verify my conclusion, there were three main texts that sealed the location for me.

The following reference in the *Handbook of Indian of Agriculture*, and subsequent further cross-checking confirmed that Patkabari was indeed in Murshidabad, West Bengal.

"Steam-ploughs have been found unsuitable for most Indian surroundings. They have been tried by Mr. Archie Hills, of Patkabari (Dt. Murshidabad), and by Mr. Armstrong, of Dehradun, and others." (Mukerji 1915).



**Location of Madhupur Village where A Cheetah was Shot in 1874.  
The Yellow Zigzag Line is the Indo-Bangladesh Border**

The only change the place's name has undergone over the years has been an addition of a single letter to the name – the Patkabari of Bengal Presidency is now "*Patikabari*" of West Bengal.

And the river "*Jellinghee*" which Raoul quotes was actually the river "Jalangi", still flowing a few hundred metres away from the village as it used to all those years ago. The following reference in *L.S.S. O'Malley's* gazetteer of Murshidabad District was my first breakthrough:

"The Bhairab is an offshoot of the Ganges, from which it branches off to the south nearly opposite to Rampur-Boalia. It empties itself, after a very circuitous course, into the Jalangi at Madhupur." (O'Malley 1914).

And while the cyberspace — with all its modernity, innovation and latest technology-use — failed in helping me locate the village on the map, it was this century old description of the village being situated where *Bhairab 'empties itself'* into the *Jalangi* that came to my rescue, and allowed me to nail the geographical coordinates of the village on *Google Earth*.

So finally, the riddle of Modopooore had been solved. As I had suspected, that nondescript village 120 years back was still a nondescript village, near the bigger Patikabari village, Nawda Block, Murshidabad district, West Bengal.

And once I had confidently identified the site, I now realized what an important discovery this was. The easternmost limit of Cheetahs in India was previously thought to be Deoghar in Santhal Parganas. There has never been, up until now, any reference to Cheetahs being encountered in lands east of Deoghar. But now, this reference proves that not only did they occur further east of Deoghar, they were infact found almost upto what is now the Bangladesh border. Located almost 200 kms south-east of Deoghar, Madhupur village is located just ~20 kms as the crow flies west of the Indo-Bangladesh Border! **And so I can confidently say that with this discovery, Asiatic Cheetah's historical range has been extended eastwards, almost upto the Bangladesh border.**

Though, strictly speaking, a single reference of a species from an area is not enough to include that area in the species' distribution-range. However, in case of the Indian Cheetah, the references are so few and scattered, that even a single reference is good enough for us – most of the times that single reference is all we have.