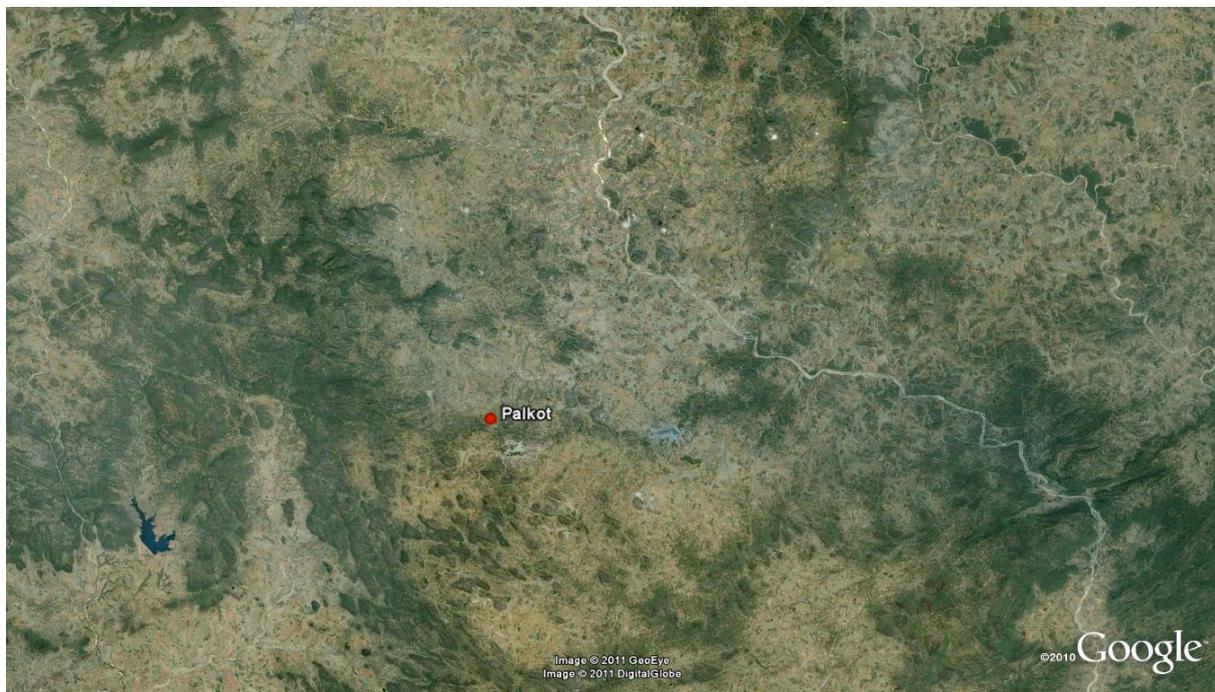


## A Cheetah Shot In The Erstwhile 'Greater Ranchi' District

About 70kms as the crow flies north-west of Jeraikela village in Saranda, is a place called Palkot—one of the eleven blocks that comprise today's Gumla district. Close to Singhbhum district, the present day district of Gumla was a part of the Lohardagga district upto 1843 and then a sub-division under the Ranchi district from 1902-1983. And it was here at Palkot that a Cheetah was shot *circa* 1905, the exact year of shooting being unknown. L.E.B. Cobden-Ramsay confirms this incident in one of the titles of the Bengal District Gazetteer series-- *Feudatory States of Orissa*, published in 1910. He writes:

“The chitah (*Felis jubata*) or hunting leopard is not supposed to inhabit Bengal, but ..... A *Chitah* was shot in Palkot in the Gumla Sub-division of the Ranchi district, which proves that though rare, they do exist in Bengal.” (Cobden-Ramsay 1910).

Palkot's southern and western environs are characterized by an undulating terrain with a prominent chain of small forested hills (called *Biru Pahaar* or the Biru Hills) running to its south and west; while the northern and eastern areas are largely flat open tracts with a few sporadic hillocks. And so it makes sense why the Cheetah was found here — they most probably would have operated in the open tracts to the north and east, while they would have sought refuge either on the peripheries of narrow series of low forested hills that sporadically dot the largely open tracts to the north and east of Palkot, or in the foothills of -- what in those days would have been -- largely contiguous southern and western Biru hill ranges. Even today, the southern forested environs of Palkot — though much degraded now with the chain of small hills having been completely fragmented by the agricultural fields that have mushroomed in the shallow valleys — collectively constitute the decrepit 183 sq.kms Palkot Wildlife Sanctuary. Of course, like most of Jharkhand's other wildlife sanctuaries, this protected area is also a 'paper tiger'-- a safe 'sanctuary' for humans rather than the wild denizens it was supposed to protect.



**Location of Palkot with a view of the Biru Hills to its South and West.**