

Siberian Weasel *Mustela sibirica* camera-trapped in Neora Valley National Park, West Bengal, India

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Abstract

Siberian Weasel *Mustela sibirica* was camera-trapped in Neora Valley National Park, West Bengal, India, on 18 April 2022 and again on 27 April. This the first known camera-trap record of this species from West Bengal.

Keywords: Mustelidae, Himalayas, *Mustela s. subhemachalana*, temperate forest

Siberian Weasel *Mustela sibirica* has a large range that includes Russia, China, Mongolia, Korea, Pakistan, Nepal, India, Bhutan, Taiwan and Myanmar (Pocock 1941, Prater 1990, Hussain 1999, Alfred et al. 2006, Abramov et al. 2016, Abramov et al. 2018, Basnet 2021). In India, it is found from the western Himalayas to the north-eastern Himalayas, from Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim and West Bengal to Arunachal Pradesh, and it has been recorded from 1500 to 4800 m asl (King 1983, Choudhury 1999, Hussain 1999, Sathyakumar 1999, Alfred et al. 2006, Menon 2016).

Bordering Sikkim and Bhutan, the Neora Valley National Park is managed by the Gorumara Wildlife Division of Kalimpong district of West Bengal (Fig. 1). It lies in the central Himalayas and is located between 26°52' and 27°7'N and between 88°45' and

88°50'E. The Neora Valley National Park contains tropical, sub-tropical, temperate and sub-temperate forest types (Mallick 2010).

During a field survey for the Himalayan Red Panda *Ailurus fulgens fulgens* in Neora Valley National Park, 20 camera-traps were set between 2000 and 3200 m asl in temperate forest. One camera-trap station, located at 27°05'07"N, 88°43'20"E (Fig. 1), detected Siberian Weasel on 18 April 2022 and 27 April 2022 (Fig. 2).

Stoat *Mustela erminea* was the initial mistaken identification. On the basis of tail length, black nose (visible in Fig. 2d) and black tail tip, the animal was later correctly identified as Siberian Weasel *Mustela sibirica*. The black tail tip is considered characteristic of the Himalayan race of the species, *M. s. subhemachalana* (Pocock 1941, Abramov et al. 2018).

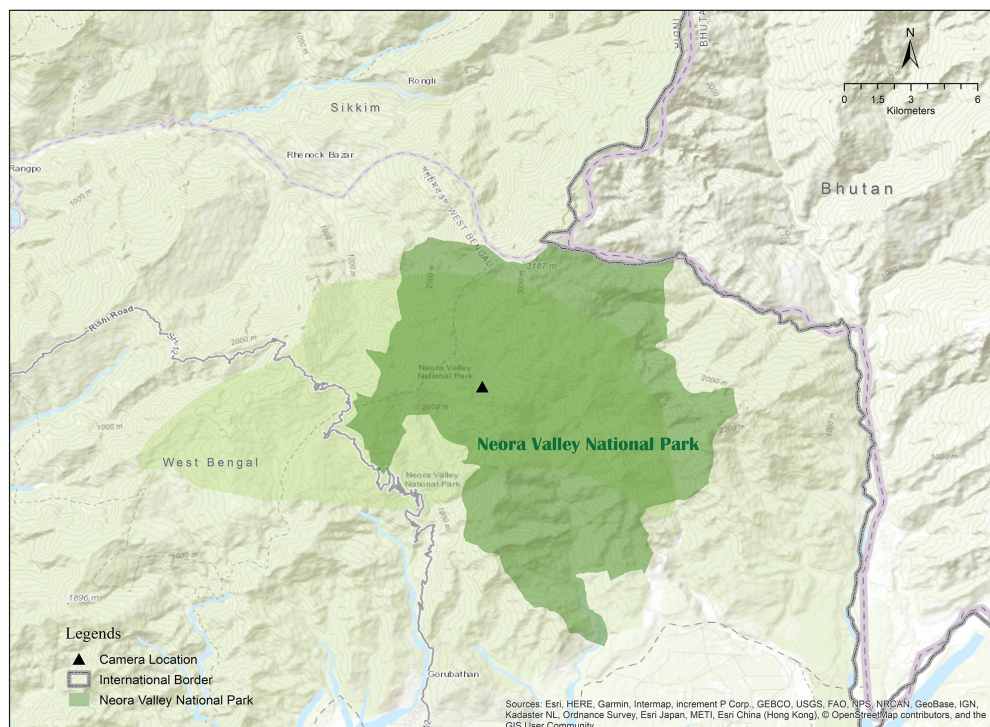


Fig. 1. Location of camera-trap where Siberian Weasel *Mustela sibirica* was recorded in Neora Valley National Park, West Bengal, India.

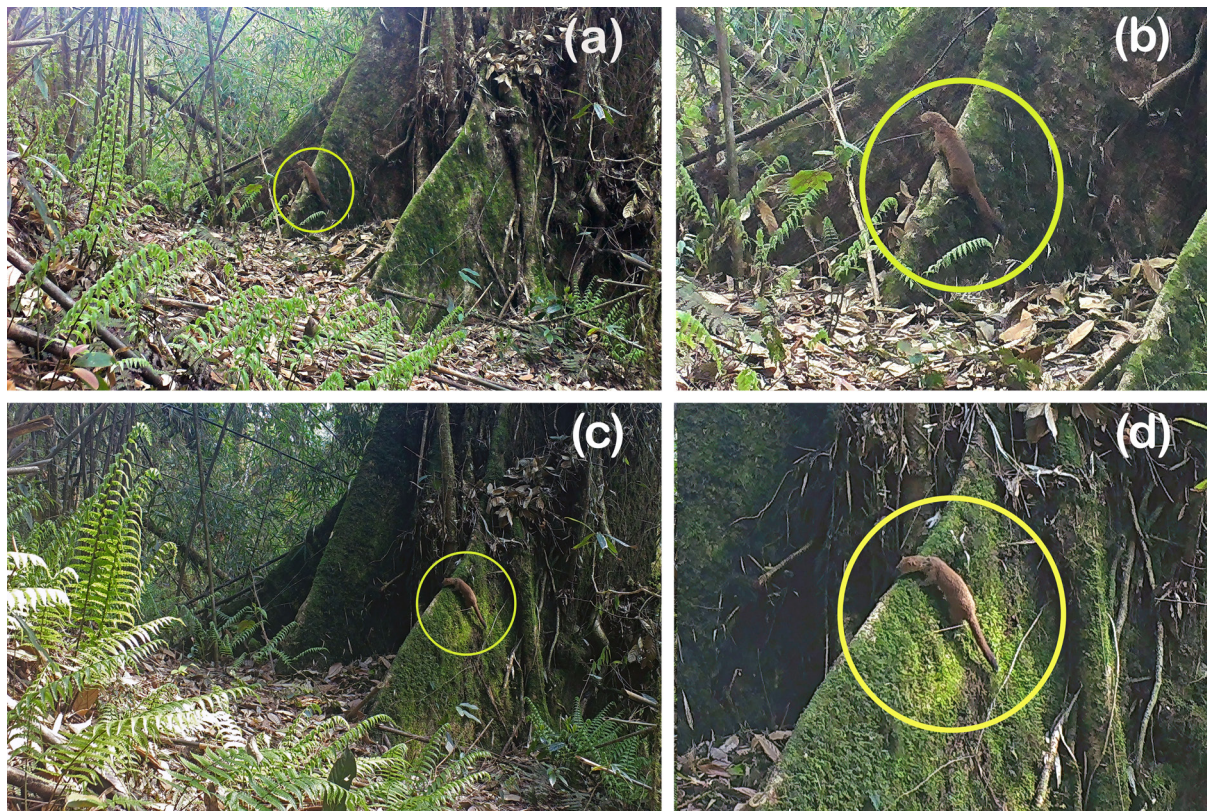


Fig. 2. (a), (b) Camera-trap image of Siberian Weasel *Mustela sibirica* at 16h55 on 18 April 2022, Neora Valley National Park, West Bengal, India. (c), (d) Siberian Weasel at 08h37 on 27 April 2022 at the same location. The black tail tip can be seen in (b) and (d) and the black nose is clearly visible in (d).

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