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Sighting of madras tree shrew *Anathana ellioti* (Waterhouse, 1850) with first photographic evidence at Ajodhya range, district Purulia, West Bengal, India

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Abstract

A study was conducted on nature and wildlife in the region of Ajodhya Range of Purulia District. During the study with other flora and fauna, Madras tree shrew *Anathana ellioti* also sighted which is not a common Species of West Bengal. In previous history no photographic evidence was found of this animal from West Bengal. This is the Sighting report of Madras tree shrew with first Photographic evidence.

Keywords: tree shrew, sighting report, first photographic evidence, endemic

Introduction

The Madras Tree Shrew *Anathana ellioti* (Waterhouse, 1850), also referred to as the Indian Tree Shrew, is a small mammal belonging to the order Scandentia, and is endemic to peninsular India. It is distributed “both in the dry and moist deciduous forests of peninsular India, south of the Ganges”^[1]. The colour of body above reddish-brown and the feet and hind legs grizzled buffy^[2]. It is usually mistaken for a stripe less squirrel or a young mongoose^[3]. This species of tree shrew is not particularly arboreal and spends much of its time on the ground or clambering about on rocky terrain in the search of insects and seeds^[4]. As per IUCN Red list assessment of year 2000 it was a Lower Risk/near threatened (LR/nt) species^[5]. The tree shrew plays an important role in the ecosystem as seed-disperser^[6].

Materials and Methods

A study was conducted during the period of July 2018 to October 2018 in the region of Ajodhya Range of Purulia District. At the beginning of the study we focused mainly to prepare checklist of faunal diversity of Purulia but surprisingly Madras Tree Shrew was sighted by our team members. At first we can't confirm the occurrence because of its confusing morphology which is very similar to a stripe less squirrel or a young mongoose. Maximum sighting reports by our team members are visually observed. But at the end our team member Anweshan Patra succeed to record the photographic evidence.

During the study for the survey of local fauna we followed “Line transect Method”. And We Used Garmin etrex 10x GPS. Nikon D5100 Camera. For the field study generally we preferred Early Morning and Afternoon.

Observation and Discussion

During the course of the study, 18 sighting records of Madras Tree shrew were recorded from different location of Ajodhya range of Purulia District. Interestingly, Madras Tree shrew was recorded earlier from Kerala (George, 1989), Tamil Nadu (Karthikeyan, 2003), Maharashtra (Pradhan, M.S. 2006), Andhra Pradesh (Giridhar and Srinivasulu, 2011), Madhya Pradesh (Ashish D. Tiple, 2013). In West Bengal this species last time Sighted by A.K. Sanyal *et al* in 2012^[8]. But After a long period this the first time we recorded the photographic evidence of the species from West Bengal. The forest under Purulia Forest Division falls under Northern tropical Dry Deciduous Forest^[7]. Physiographically the forest areas under this Division falls under a Sub-region of North-Eastern part of Chhotonagpur plateau with undulating and rolling topography.

Morphologically this species looks like squirrel but no stripes present in the body. Dorsal part of the body is chocolate brown colour and ventral part is grayish. Feet are also grey.

A pale marking present around the eyes. Ears are large, lower lobe in larger than upper lobe. Snout is longer than squirrel. Tail is long and fluffy.

In our study we observed that This Species of Tree shrew prefer Rock crevices and burrows in forest as their habitat.

And Fruits, Small reptiles, Crabs and insects are in their food habit.

Main predators of this species are Jungle cat, Golden jackal, crested serpent eagle, Indian eagle owl, Barn owl.



Fig 1: The madras tree shrew *Anathana ellioti* in habitat.



Fig 2: The madras tree shrew *Anathana ellioti*.

Table 1: Sighting details of *Anathana ellioti* at Ajodhya range.

Serial Number	Date	GPS Location	Time	Temperature	Number of individuals
1.	03/07/2018	23.2131511, 86.0846729	10:23	28°C	1
2.	03/07/2018	23.2112050, 86.0832701	15:38	31°C	4
3.	04/07/2018	23.2107070, 86.0800595	09:50	26°C	4
4.	05/07/2018	23.2130556, 86.0775000	08:23	26°C	2
5.	09/07/2018	23.1920189, 86.1477839	14:30	29°C	3
6.	23/07/2018	23.185950, 86.158886	10:07	28°C	3
7.	29/07/2018	23.1913877, 86.1475623	16:00	28°C	5
8.	30/07/2018	23.2130556, 86.0511111	08:05	25°C	1
9.	30/07/2018	23.1825481, 86.1611376	08:39	25°C	1
10.	30/07/2018	23.1845456, 86.1475958	16:07	26°C	3
11.	08/08/2018	23.1851203, 86.133714	08:29	24°C	1
12.	08/08/2018	23.1843206, 86.1342780	09:03	25°C	1
13.	08/08/2018	23.1882599, 86.1262649	11:05	28°C	4
14.	09/08/2018	23.2158544, 86.0599614	16:50	27°C	1
15.	10/08/2018	23.2132590, 86.0695875	15:50	28°C	2
16.	10/08/2018	23.2158611, 86.0691503	16:10	28°C	2
17.	11/08/2018	23.2132220, 86.0850668	08:45	25°C	3
18.	13/08/2018	23.2130874, 86.0855761	08:23	25°C	2

Conclusion

This species plays a vital role in maintaining ecological balance. Major threats of this species are Habitat loss due to deforestation and Hunting by local People. It is strongly recommended that the species be brought under the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act Schedule and also protect its habitat.

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