

SIGHTING

FIRST PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF SMOOTH - COATED OTTERS (*Lutrogale perspicillata*) FROM SAURASHTRA, GUJARAT, INDIA

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Abstract: Of the three species of otters found in India, the Smooth-coated otter is the only otter species found in the state of Gujarat. The authors photographed a Smooth-coated otter during field surveys by our team near the city of Bhavnagar in Saurashtra, a peninsular region of Gujarat on the western coast of India. After an extensive search of the area, the team also found tracks of a Smooth-coated otter. This photographic evidence is the first report of Smooth-coated otters in the Saurashtra region of Gujarat.

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Keywords Smooth-coated otter, Bhavnagar, Saurashtra, Gujarat, India.

The Smooth-coated otter is widely distributed across South and Southeast Asia, including Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Southwest China, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Sumatra, Java and Borneo (Mason and Macdonald, 1986; Corbet and Hill, 1992). The Smooth-coated otter typically inhabits lakes, large rivers, dams, irrigation canals, swamps, shallow rice fields and coastal mangroves (Menon, 2003). Here we report the first photographic evidence of Smooth-coated otters from Saurashtra, Gujarat, India.

At 1300 hrs on 15th October 2022, during field work by the team near the city of Bhavnagar, in the Saurashtra region of Gujarat, while travelling near a temple close to

a waterbody with a GPS coordinate of 22.0416033, 71.9727351 (Fig. 1), the team observed a short hairy mongoose shaped animal resting near agriculture land. A Nikon P1000 camera was used to capture images of the animal. It was later identified as a Smooth-coated otter (Fig. 2) by the corresponding author. The species had never before been reported at Saurashtra (Suthar, 2017).

After the identification of the species, the team surveyed the area for a week with different methods including a sign survey. From a questionnaire among locals regarding the species, the team learned that there is only one kind of otter they have noticed. We found tracks (Fig. 3) at two locations through a sign survey and believe that the tracks were from one individual otter.

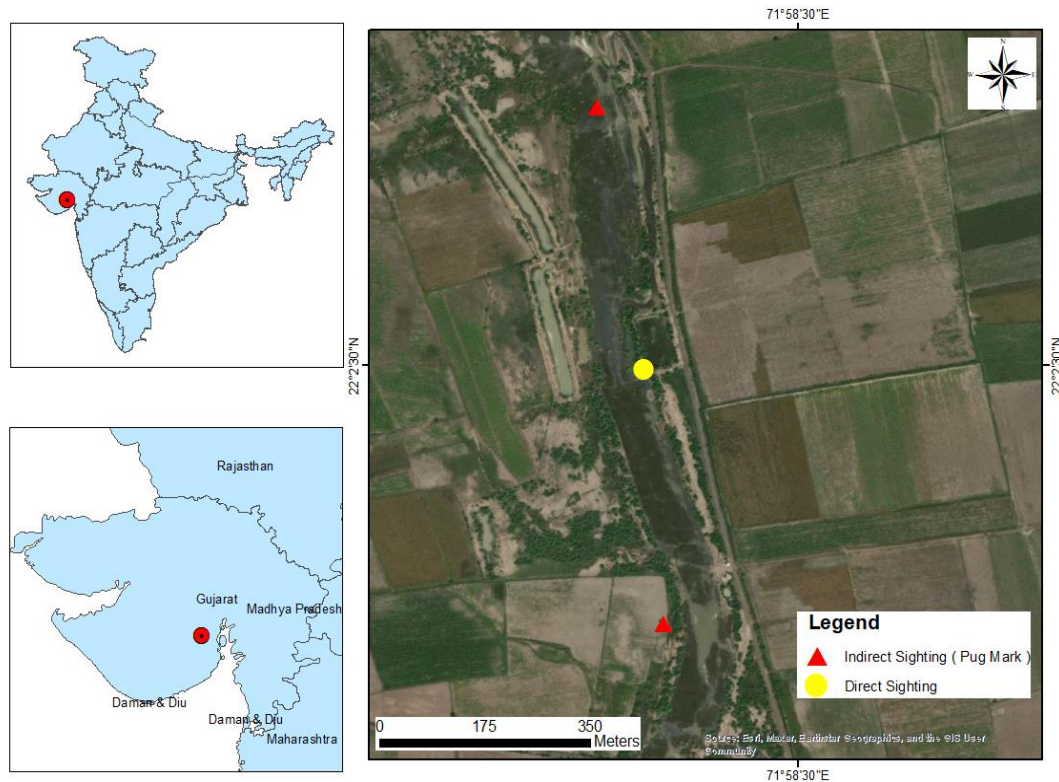


Figure 1. Map of the location where the Smooth-coated otter at Saurashtra, Gujarat was observed.



Figure 2 a & b. Smooth-coated otter photographed at Bhavnagar, Saurashtra.



Figure 3. Smooth-coated otter track in the vicinity of the observed otter.

This photographic evidence documents the presence of Smooth-coated otters in the Saurashtra region of Gujarat, implying a new local distribution of Smooth-coated otters in Gujarat. Further studies on the species will be carried out with the support of the Forest Department, along with work to protect the species by conducting a threat assessment.

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RESUMÉ

PREMIERS ENREGISTREMENTS PHOTOGRAPHIQUES DE LOUTRES À PELAGE LISSE (*Lutrogale perspicillata*) DU SAURASHTRA, À GUJARAT EN INDE

Parmi les trois espèces de loutres observées en Inde, la loutre à pelage lisse est la seule espèce de loutre trouvée dans l'état du Gujarat. Les auteurs ont photographié une loutre

à pelage lisse, lors d'enquêtes de terrain menées par notre équipe, près de la ville de Bhavnagar à Saurashtra, une région péninsulaire du Gujarat située sur la côte ouest de l'Inde. Suite une recherche approfondie dans la région, l'équipe a également trouvé des traces d'une loutre à pelage lisse. Ce document photographique est la première observation de loutres à pelage lisse dans la région de Saurashtra au Gujarat.

RESUMEN

PRIMER REGISTRO FOTOGRÁFICO DE NUTRIAS LISAS (*Lutrogale perpicillata*) DE SAURASHTRA, GUJARAT, INDIA

De las tres especies de nutria que se encuentran en India, la Nutria Lisa es la única especie que se encuentra en Gujarat. Los autores fotografiaron una Nutria Lisa durante relevamientos de campo en Bhavnagar, Saurashtra, en el estado occidental de Gujarat. Después de una búsqueda en áreas cercanas, también fueron observadas huellas de la Nutria Lisa. Esta es la primera evidencia fotográfica de Nutrias Lisas en la región de Saurashtra en Gujarat, India.

સારાંશ –

સૌરાષ્ટ્ર, ગુજરાત, ભારતથી સ્મૂથ - કોટેડ ઓટર્સ (લુટ્રા પર્પિસીલાટા)નો પ્રથમ ફોટોગ્રાફિક રેકોર્ડ

ભારતમાં જળ માંજર / જલ બિલાડી (ઓટર) ની ત્રણ પ્રજાતિઓ જોવા મળે છે, જળ માંજર / જલ બિલાડી (સ્મૂથ કોટેડ ઓટર) એ એકમાત્ર જલ બિલાડી ની પ્રજાતિ છે જે ગુજરાતમાં જોવા મળે છે. ગુજરાતના ભાવનગર (સૌરાષ્ટ્ર) ખાતે અમારી ટીમ દ્વારા ક્ષેત્ર સર્વેક્ષણ દરમિયાન, લેખકોએ એક જળ માંજર / જલ બિલાડી (સ્મૂથ કોટેડ ઓટર)નો ફોટોગ્રાફ લીધો હતો. વ્યાપક ક્ષેત્રીય કાર્યો અને સંભવિત વિસ્તારોની શોધ કર્યા પછી, ટીમને જળ માંજર / જલ બિલાડી (સ્મૂથ કોટેડ ઓટર) ના પગમાર્ક મળ્યા. આ ફોટોગ્રાફિક પુરાવા ગુજરાતના સૌરાષ્ટ્ર પ્રદેશમાં જળ માંજર / જલ બિલાડી (સ્મૂથ કોટેડ ઓટર)ની હાજરીનો પ્રથમ અહેવાલ છે.

ସାରାଂଶ –

ସୌରାଷ્ટ୍ର ଗୁଜୁରାଟ ରେ ଦେଖାଯାଇଥିବା ପ୍ରଥମ ପାଣି ଓଧର ସ୍ଥିରଚିତ୍ର ର ବିବରଣ

ଭାରତରେ ସମୁଦାୟ ଭାବେ ତିନି ପ୍ରକାରର ପାଣି ଓଧ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମିଳନ୍ତି । ମାତ୍ର ଭାରତ ର ଗୁଜୁରାଟ ପ୍ରଦେଶ ରେ କେବଳ ନରମ ଲୋମ ଯୁକ୍ତ ପାଣି ଓଧ ପ୍ରଜାତି ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମିଳିଥାଏ । ଆମର ବନ୍ୟଜନ୍ତୁ ସୁରକ୍ଷା ଦଳ, ସୌରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ସ୍ଥିତ ଭାବନଗର ର ଏକ ସ୍ଥାନକୁ ଅତିକ୍ରମ କରିବା ସମୟରେ, ଆମ ଦଳ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ କିଛି ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଏକ ପାଣି ଓଧର ସ୍ଥିରଚିତ୍ର ଉତ୍ତୋଳନ କରିଥିଲେ । କିଛି ଦିନ ଉକ୍ତ ସ୍ଥାନରେ ନିୟମିତ ତଦାରଖ କରିବା ପରେ, ଆମକୁ ପାଣି ଓଧର ଖୋଜ ଚିହ୍ନ ମିଳିଥିଲା । ଉକ୍ତ ଅଭିଲେଖ ରୁ ଆମେ ପାଣି ଓଧର ନୂତନ ଅବସ୍ଥିତି ବିଷୟରେ ଉପନୀତ ହୋଇଥିଲୁ । ଉକ୍ତ ସ୍ଥିରଚିତ୍ର ତଥା ମିଳିଥିବା ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରମାଣ, ପାଣି ଓଧର ସୌରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରରେ ନୂତନ ଅବସ୍ଥିତିକୁ ଦର୍ଶାଉଛି ।