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Cover: Stripe-necked Mongoose *Urva vitticollis* in poster colours, adapted from photograph by Ashni Dhawale, by Pooja Ramdas Patil.



The first photographic evidence of Ruddy Mongoose *Herpestes smithii* Gray, 1837 (Mammalia: Carnivora: Herpestidae) in Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, Uttar Pradesh, India

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The herpestid family of mongooses is highly adaptable and can be found in diverse environments, ranging from tropical forests to deserts. These mongooses have a diverse diet that includes insects, crabs, small mammals, birds, and reptiles, with a particular fondness for snakes, and they also consume bird eggs. Some mongoose also consume vegetable matter in the form of tubers, fruits, and berries (Feldliamer et al. 1999). The enormous variety of food they consume is produced in a wide range of environments, making it difficult to measure, even though they must respond to site productivity in some way. Hence, the apparent food abundance is not a good indicator of the distribution or abundance of the majority of species. Environmental and landscape parameters play a significant role in shaping the distribution of mongoose in India, as highlighted in the study by Kalle et al. (2012). The Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii* is commonly sighted in disturbed areas, dry secondary forests, and thorn woods, as reported by Gupta (2011). However, it's worth noting that despite their natural habitat preferences, these mongooses are still under high demand in the wildlife trade. Trappers readily capture them to sell them as

pets, as documented by Hanfee & Ahmed (1999) and Kalle (2011).

The black-tipped tail of the Ruddy Mongoose, which is slightly larger than the Indian grey mongoose, is a defining characteristic (Mudappa 2013). The IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species, categorised it as 'Least Concern' (Mudappa & Choudhury 2016). It is found in peninsular India and Sri Lanka, in the Western and Eastern Ghats, up to the open thorn forest of Rajasthan, and north to Bihar (Phillips 1984; Dookia 2013; Mudappa 2013). In more recent times, the species was documented in Nepal as reported by Subba et al. (2014).

Located on the Indo-Nepal border in the Bahraich District of Uttar Pradesh, the Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary covers an area of 400.69 km² and is positioned between 28°56'72"N, 81°20'97"E. It lies in the Tarai-Bhabhar biogeographic subdivision of the upper Gangetic Plain and supports a variety of habitats (Kalam 2005). In the Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, the major rivers Karnali and Girwa from Nepal converge and give rise to the Ghaghara River, as documented by Bajpai et al. (2012).

Three distinct Ruddy Mongoose sightings were

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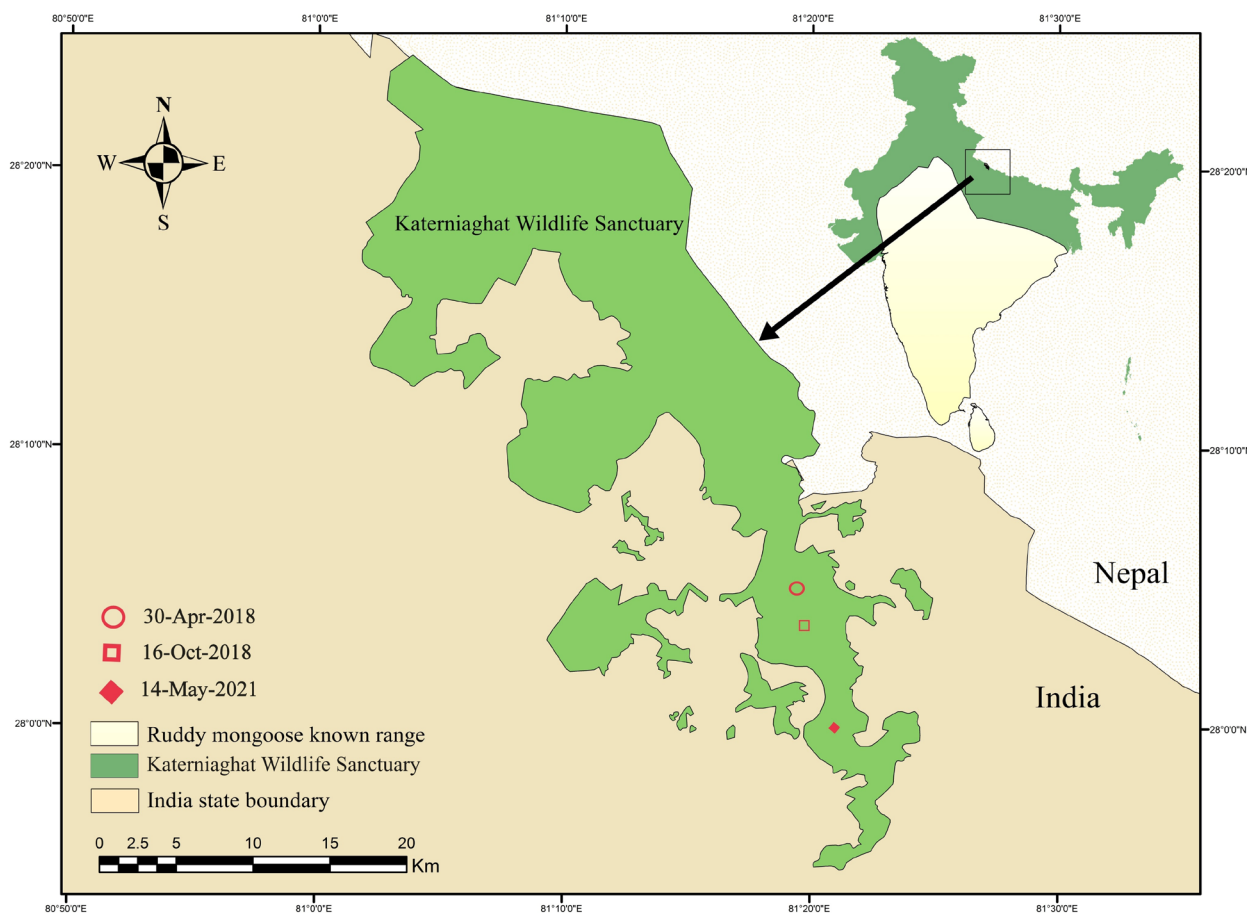


Figure 1. Distribution map of Ruddy Mongoose with recorded locations in the study area (Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary) with sightings date highlighted.

Table 1. Distribution records of Ruddy Mongoose.

	Date	Time	Latitude	Longitude	Altitude	Record	Individuals
1	14.v.2021	1444	28.01482	81.32987	134 m	Direct sighting	2
2	30.iv.2018	1255	27.99394	81.33528	138 m	Direct sighting	2
3	16.x.2018	1410	28.02814	81.32841	134 m	Direct sighting	1

made in the Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary. The photo that was taken during the direct observation was used to assist identify the species. All three observations were made directly. The species was sighted and photographed while crossing the forest road in the Motipur range of Katerniaghat WS. The Indian Grey Mongoose and Small Indian Mongoose, the other two species living in the study area, can be distinguished from the Ruddy Mongoose by their black-tipped tail. With its diverse vegetation, the Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary is with tropical moist deciduous forest (Bajpai et al. 2012). *Ficus benghalensis*, *Ficus racemosa*, *Shorea*

robusta, *Tectona grandis*, *Syzygium cumini*, and the shrub species *Lantana camara*, *Glycosmis pentapthylla*, and *Clerodendrum viscosu* make up the majority of the vegetation at all three observation sites.

Previously known distribution range of the Ruddy Mongoose is in peninsular India, and the states of Rajasthan and Bihar, and Sri Lanka (Muddappa 2013). The Ruddy Mongoose is less tolerant toward humans and is considered to dwell in habitats with less human disturbance (Hussain 1999). It was previously recorded in Asola Wildlife Sanctuary in Delhi, but there were no previous records of Ruddy Mongoose from Katerniaghat



Image 1. Adult Ruddy Mongoose *Herpestes smithii* with a visible black-tail tip.



Image 2. Ruddy Mongoose *Herpestes smithii*.

Wildlife Sanctuary; however, it was recently recorded from Banke National Park in Nepal (Subba et al. 2014). Thus, our record of Ruddy Mongoose in Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary marks the distribution in gap regions of its known distribution range.

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Image 3. Ruddy Mongoose in its recorded habitat in the Motipur range of Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary.

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