



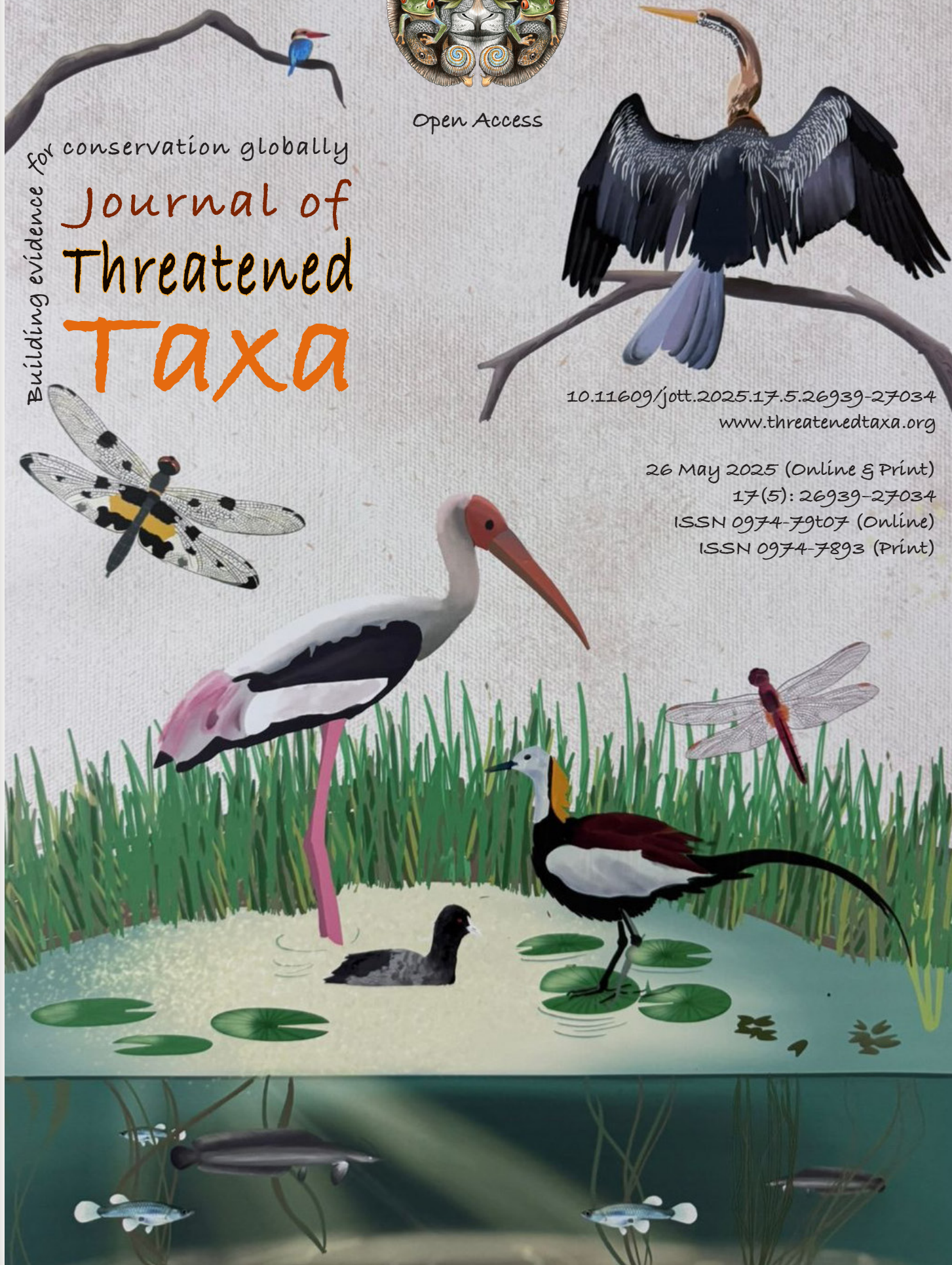
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continued on the back inside cover

Cover: A digital art of water birds of Noyyal River and its wetlands in Coimbatore District by Megha A. Kashyap.



First photographic evidence and record of the Indian Pangolin *Manis crassicaudata* (Mammalia: Pholidota: Manidae) from Rajkot, Gujarat, India

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The eight species of pangolins distributed across Africa and Asia constitute the order Pholidota and the single family, Manidae. All pangolin species have experienced a drastic decline in populations, primarily because of hunting and illegal international trade in wild caught pangolins and are at the edge of extinction in Asia (Heinrich et al. 2016). In India, there are two species: the Indian Pangolin *Manis crassicaudata*, which is relatively widely distributed throughout much of the country, extending from the southern part of the Himalaya and into southern Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (Tikader 1983; Srinivasulu & Srinivasulu 2012; Mahmood et al. 2020; Aditya et al. 2021) and the Chinese Pangolin *Manis pentadactylus*, primarily found in the northeastern states of India and in Nepal (Srinivasulu & Srinivasulu 2012; Challender et al. 2019). Although these two pangolin species appear similar, they can be distinguished by their scale characteristics. The Indian Pangolin has larger scales and 11–13 rows of scales

along its back, while the Chinese Pangolin has smaller scales and 15–18 rows across its back (Pocock 1924).

Indian Pangolins occur in a wide range of habitats across the Indian subcontinent, including both forested and non-forested areas (Roberts 1977; Mahmood et al. 2020). The Indian Pangolin is protected under Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and Schedule I in the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972; it is currently classified as ‘Endangered’ on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species due to a rapid decline in its population because of hunting & wildlife trade, habitat loss, mortalities from electric fences, and human wildlife interactions (Mahmood et al. 2020). Pangolins exist in very low densities; few published studies measuring densities for different species of pangolins indicate densities of 0.0001 individuals per km² for the Indian Pangolin, and 0.001 individuals per km² for the Chinese Pangolin. The Indian Pangolin is nocturnal, sleeping in burrows throughout the day.

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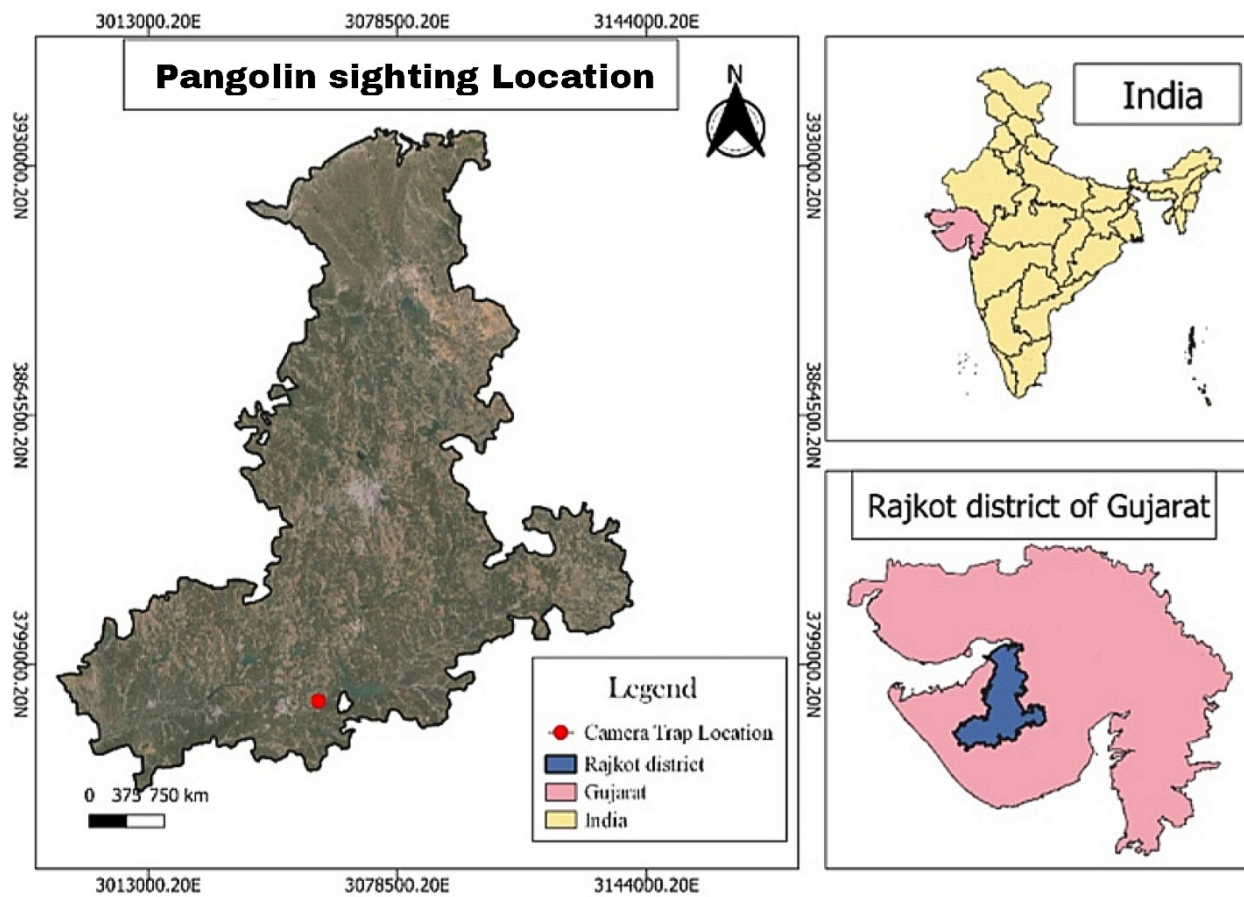


Image 1. Location of the Indian Pangolin recorded from Rajkot District, Gujarat, India.



Image 2. Camera trap record of Indian Pangolin *Manis crassicaudata* from Rajkot District, India.

Indian Pangolins have been seen to burrow in two types: feeding burrows and living burrows (Mahmood et al. 2020).

Pangolin scales are used as a whole, or in powdered form in the preparation of traditional medicines in east Asia, mainly China and Vietnam (Baillie et al. 2014; Mohapatra et al. 2015; Challender & Waterman 2017; Mahmood et al. 2018). Indian Pangolins in their habitat are often killed due to the belief that they dig up graves and pull out the buried dead bodies. In addition, farmers kill the animals allegedly for damaging their crops and agricultural lands by digging burrows (Mahmood et al. 2018). Two camera traps were strategically deployed at random locations informed by local knowledge provided by shepherds who routinely bring their livestock to a nearby water source. The selected area also comprised agricultural land in proximity to hill slopes. The camera traps were installed approximately six meters apart. Notably, one of the camera traps successfully documented the presence of a pangolin (*Manis* sp.), indicating its occurrence in the study area. A record from one of the camera traps of the pangolin was obtained as part of a camera trapping study that is being undertaken currently by the authors to inventory the mammal community and its diversity patterns across the Rajkot District of Gujarat (22.303°N, 70.802°E) (Images 1 & 2). The dominant forest type in this area is tropical dry deciduous and scrub forests (Champion & Seth 1968). Passive digital infra-red camera traps (Trail Cam and Bushnell 8 mp, Scout Guard 20 mp) were set across habitat types in the study area. The species was identified using a field identification guide for mammals (Menon & Daniel 2003).

The presence of the Indian Pangolin indicates the possibility of the persistence of the population in the region. Pangolins rely on relatively undisturbed natural habitats for food, shelter, and breeding grounds. Further

research into their distribution could help reveal more information about their habitat selection and ecology in this region.

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