



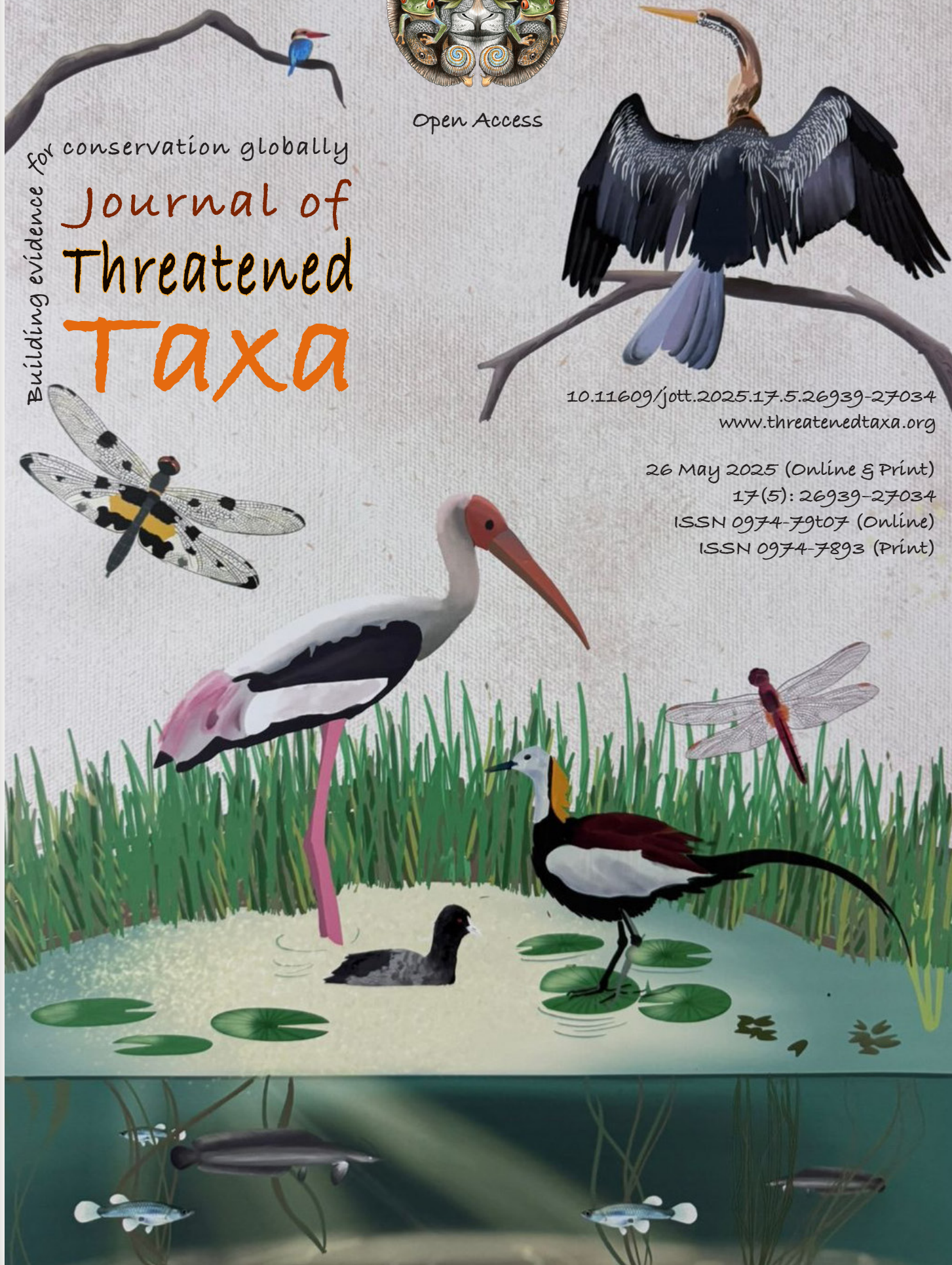
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Cover: A digital art of water birds of Noyyal River and its wetlands in Coimbatore District by Megha A. Kashyap.

devastated coastal habitats across the Andaman & Nicobar Archipelago (Sankaran et al. 2005). A rapid post-tsunami wildlife assessment provided an overview of the surviving coastal flora and fauna, with preliminary observations on the distribution of *B. latro* (Sankaran et al. 2005; Sivakumar 2010). Post-tsunami records from Kamorta, Menchal, and Great Nicobar confirmed the continued presence of *B. latro* in the Nicobar Islands (Patankar 2007). Although Hume's (1874) record is the only documented pre-tsunami report of *B. latro* from Car Nicobar Island, no post-tsunami records have been documented. Efforts to locate Coconut Crabs during the post-tsunami surveys on Car Nicobar were unsuccessful (Patankar & D'souza 2012), which may have led to the exclusion of this island in the subsequent study by Sivaperuman et al. (2023).

This paper presents the first post-tsunami incidental

sighting of *B. latro* on Car Nicobar Island, thereby providing an updated distributional record. On 13 April 2024, a single *B. latro* specimen was observed (Geographical coordinates: 9.1640 °N, 92.7990 °E) and photographed from Car Nicobar Island (Images 1 & 2). The absence of pleopods identified the specimen as male (carapace length: 121 mm; cephalothoracic width: 52 mm), weighing approximately 1,220 g. Locally known as 'Nyioŕv' (/nju:/) in 'Pu' (Car Nicobar), a dialect of the Nicobarese language. The Coconut Crab was found in a subsurface limestone karst, a small cave located 3.36 km inland from the east coast of Car Nicobar (Image 1). The presence of coconut fruit and anthropogenic litter inside (the cave is a recreation spot, resulting in the spillover of food waste) the cave may have attracted the Coconut Crab (Image 2). Discarded food packaging and plastic waste pose significant hazards, as crabs can become

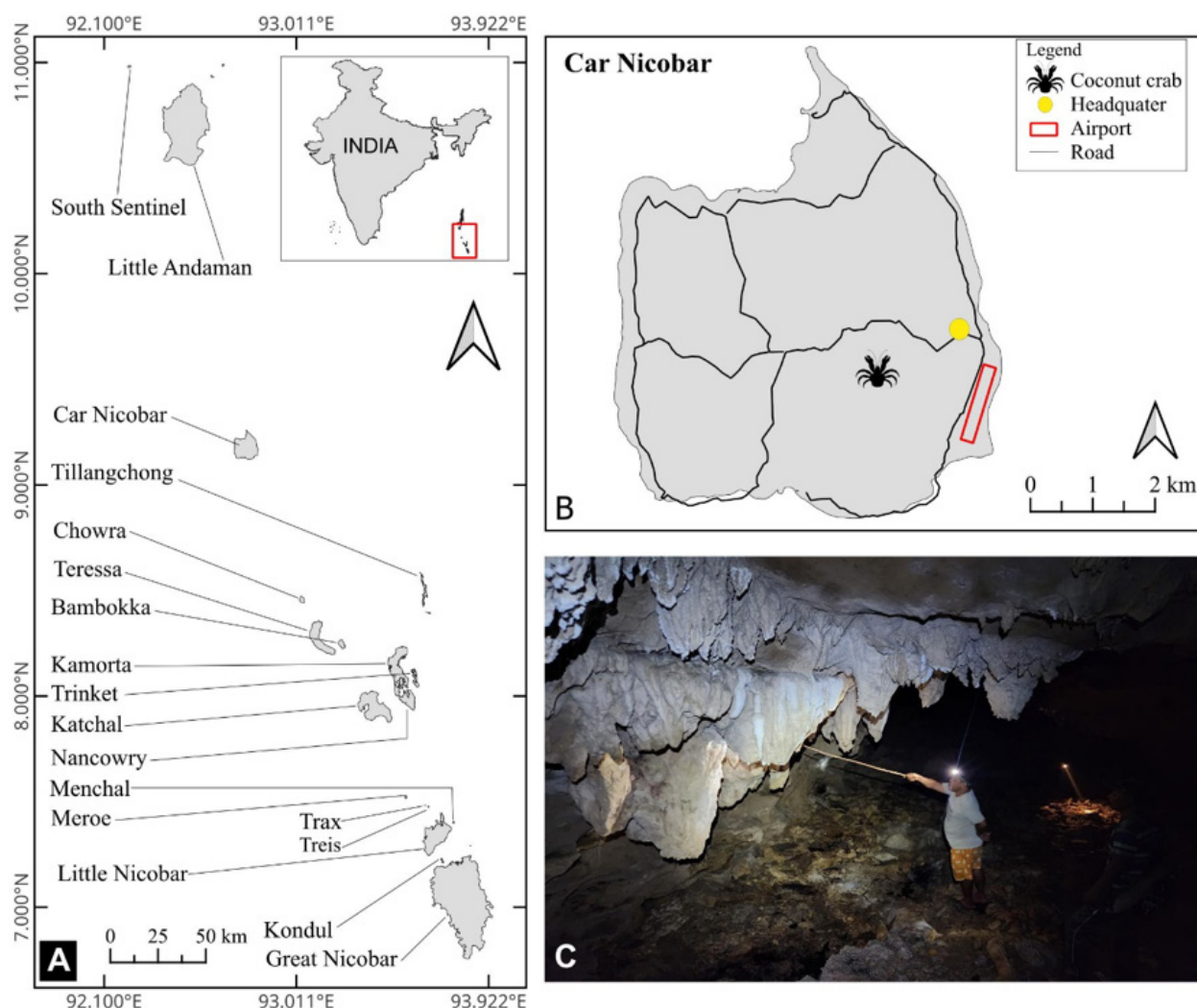


Image 1. Study area map: A—reported geographic distribution of Coconut Crab *Birgus latro* from the Andaman & Nicobar Islands | B—Car Nicobar Island | C—limestone karst. © Dhanesh Ponnu.

Table 1. Pre- and post-tsunami distributional records of Coconut Crabs *Birgus latro* from the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. (+)—present as per local ecological knowledge of Nicobari Tribe | ()—not been surveyed yet | (–)—surveyed but not found | *—Distribution referring to Nicobar Islands without specifying a particular island.

Island	Island subgroup	Island	Observations	Reference	
				Pre-tsunami records	Post-tsunami records
Andaman group	South Andaman	South Sentinel	1905, 1976	Alcock 1905; Altevogt & Davis 1976	()
		Little Andaman	1905, 2015–2018	Alcock 1905	Sivaperuman et al. 2023
Nicobar group	Car Nicobar	Car Nicobar	1874	Hume 1874	(This study) (–) Patankar & D'souza 2012
	Nancowry	Teressa	2015–2018	(+)	Sivaperuman et al. 2023
		Chowra	2011	(+)	Zaibin et al. 2012
		Bambokka	2015–2018	(+)	Sivaperuman et al. 2023
		Kamorta	2015–2018	(+)	Patankar 2007; Sivaperuman et al. 2023
		Trinket		(+)	()
		Katchal	2006, 2015–2018	(+)	Sivakumar 2010; Sivaperuman et al. 2023
		Nancowry	2015–2018	(+)	Sivaperuman et al. 2023
		Tillangchong	2005, 2006, 2015–2018	(+)	Sankaran et al. 2005; Sivakumar 2010
	Great Nicobar	Little Nicobar	2015–2018	(+)	Sivaperuman et al. 2023
		Menchal	2005, 2006, 2008, 2015–2018	Altevogt & Davis 1975	Sankaran et al. 2005; Sivakumar 2010; Sivaperuman et al. 2023; Patankar 2007; Patankar & D'souza 2012
		Meroe	1975, 2015–2018	Altevogt & Davis 1975	Sivaperuman et al. 2023
		Treis	2005	(+)	Sankaran et al. 2005
		Trax	2005	(+)	Sankaran et al. 2005
		Kondul	2015–2018	()	(–) Sivaperuman et al. 2023
		Great Nicobar	1966, 2007	Daniel & Premkumar 1968	Patankar 2007
			1932	*Man 1932	

entangled or ingest harmful materials. As adult *B. latro* individuals prefer residing inland or the interior forest (Sato & Yoseda 2013), it becomes crucial to include interior forests and inland caves in survey efforts. Surveying these inland populations remains challenging due to the cryptic nature and nocturnal behaviour of the species. Moreover, *B. latro* appears to persist in other areas of Nicobar Islands where earlier surveys, such as Patankar & D'souza (2012) and Sivaperuman et al. (2023), were unsuccessful in detecting its presence. Pre- and post-tsunami records of *B. latro* from the Andaman & Nicobar Islands have indicated the reduction in its distribution range (Table 1). Incidental sightings like this can guide surveys in regions such as Trinket, Kondul, and Chowra, previously thought to be locally extirpated (Sivaperuman et al. 2023; Patankar & D'souza 2012). These regions require additional systematic monitoring of Coconut Crabs to better understand their distribution.

Moreover, events like the tsunami may significantly impact its home range, population recovery, genetic diversity, and migration pattern.

For species such as Coconut Crabs, which are rare, elusive, or in challenging environments, incidental sightings provide valuable insights into the species' presence, behaviour, or habitat preferences that might otherwise remain undocumented. This record highlights the importance of surveying interior forests, particularly areas with geological structures like caves, for detecting coconut crabs. This study extends the northernmost recorded distribution of *B. latro* within the Nicobar Archipelago, highlighting the importance of Car Nicobar as a key site for future survey efforts.



Image 2. A—photograph of the Coconut Crab *Birgus latro* | B—Coconut Crab climbing on cave wall | C—pile of sprouting and decaying Coconut *Cocos nucifera* | D—plastic wrapper (packaged food item) found in cave. © Dhanesh Ponnuru.

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