

CORRESPONDENCE

Recent sighting of stoat *Mustela erminea ferghanae* from Chandra valley in Lahaul and Spiti district, Himachal Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

In the paper, we report the sighting of *Mustela erminea ferghanae* at Chandra Valley, Lahaul, Himachal Pradesh. *Mustela erminea ferghanae* is one of the four *Mustela* species, which is listed in the Schedule I (Part I) of Indian Wildlife (Protection Act), 1972 and CITES Appendix III.

KEYWORDS: *Mustela erminea ferghanae*, Stoat, sighting, Himachal Pradesh

Received 12 November 2018, Accepted 10 December 2018 | Email: agnic17@gmail.com

Introduction

The Stoat *Mustela erminea ferghanae* (Family: Mustelidae) is one of the four *Mustela* species (other three are *Mustela altaica* - Pale or Mountain Weasel, *Mustela kathiah* - Yellow-bellied Weasel and *Mustela sibirica* - Siberian or Himalayan Weasel) that found in the north-western province of India (Alfred *et al.* 2006). It is listed in the Schedule I (Part I) of Indian Wildlife (Protection Act), 1972 and CITES Appendix III. It is a carnivorous animal and common preys include vole *Alticola* sp., hares *Lepus* sp. and, pikas *Ochotona* sp. (Kotia *et al.*, 2011).

During a biodiversity survey at Chandra valley, Lahaul, Himachal Pradesh on 20th August, 2018 at 03:44 pm, we had sighted one individual of this species (Fig. 2). The site (Fig. 1, 32°25'00.71"N, 077°13'58.93"E; MSL: 3117m, recorded by Garmin eTrex20) is close to the river Chandra near the Khoksar village. Common vegetation of this area includes *Carduus edelbergii*, *Hippophae rhamnoides*, *Hippophae salicifolia*, *Hyoscyamus niger*, *Impatiens balsamina*, *Rosa webbiana*, *Rumex nepalensis*, *Salix fragalis* and *Trigonella emodi*.

Lahaul and Spiti District of Himachal Pradesh is located in the Indian Trans-Himalaya, the region which harbours many rare and endangered fauna and flora (Kala, 2000) and ecology of majority of these species is still obscure and the Stoat *Mustela erminea ferghanae* is no exception. It is one

of the least studied mammals in India with little known information about its local ecology and status (Kotia *et al.*, 2011). Thus, it is suggested to carry out research to understand the biology and ecology of this little known animal for effective conservation management practice in Indian Trans-Himalayan region.

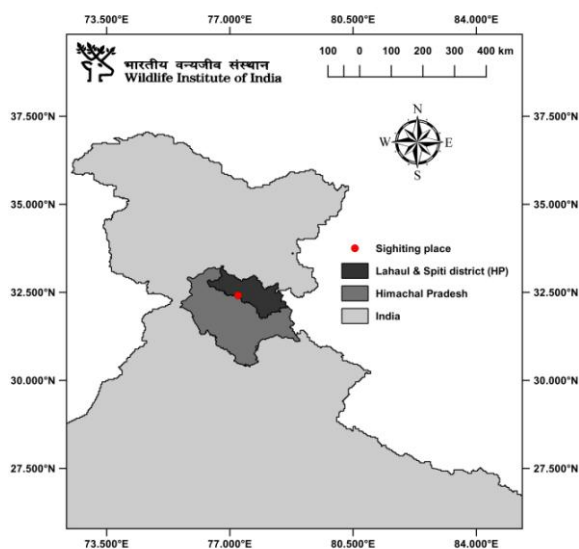


Figure 1. Stoat *Mustela erminea ferghanae* sighting place at Lahaul and Spiti district, Himachal Pradesh



Figure 2. Stoat *Mustela erminea ferghanae* at Khoksar village of Chandra valley, Lahaul, Himachal Pradesh.



Figure 3. Habitat of Stoat *Mustela erminea ferghanae* at Chandra Valley in Lahaul, Himachal Pradesh.

Acknowledgements

We are thankful to the Director, WII and Dean, FWS, WII for providing necessary facilities for the study and to

National Mission on Himalayan Studies (NMHS), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India for providing financial support.

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