



Short Communication

A NOTE ON HIMALAYAN GORAL *NEMORHAEDUS GORAL* (HARDWICKE 1825) AT DARJEELING DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL, INDIA

INTRODUCTION

Himalayan goral, a well built goral having antelope-like also known as goat-even antelope. It is a medium sized goat even smaller than domestic goat possesses short horn backwardly curved with ring marks. Two sub-species such as *Nemorhaedus goral goral* (Hardwicke) and *Nemorhaedus goral hodgsoni* Pocock, occur within Indian limit. The *Nemorhaedus goral goral* is known to occur in Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal and north-eastern states of India (Alfred *et al.*, 2002). The other sub-species *Nemorhaedus goral hodgsoni* found in Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim state of India. Himalayan goral was earlier found in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling district of West Bengal, now it is restricted to Himalayan foot hills of Darjeeling district, West Bengal (English 1919, Mitra 1957). Gavallini (1992) surveyed different areas of Himachal Pradesh to find the goral population. Mishra *et al.*, (1994) surveyed parts of Doon valley and some areas of Mizoram state for occurrence of goral. The predator of gorals and their role in ecosystem was carried out by Thomas (2001), which constitutes Snow leopard, Grey wolf, Feral dogs etc.

The present report is based on survey conducted at two sanctuaries *viz* Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary and Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary both located at Darjeeling district, West Bengal, falls at the foothills of eastern Himalaya.

Goral is a herbivorous mammalian montane species comes under family Bovidae. Two sanctuaries comprised of 197 sq. km. area altogether and out that 50 sq. km. was habitable

area for gorals which comprised of 25% of total sanctuaries area. Field trip in these two sanctuaries carried out during September 2011, six days field work in each sanctuary was made for locating gorals. A total of 90 hours were spent in the field. Topography of the areas was hilly and abruptly undulating with loose top soil. No standard survey method could be followed, only random sampling and point method have been adopted depending upon the terrain. Survey was conducted mostly on foot on forest tracks and trails for locating the gorals and their pellets collection. Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in Kurseong Sub - division, lies between 26° 23' and 26° 47' N and 88° 33' and 88° 23' E with an area of 159 sq. km. extending between an elevation of 1300 m and 1500 m. Latpanchar is the highest peak of Mahananda WLS (1135m) and it is the ideal habitat for observing and locating wild animals from a number of watch towers. Forest type of the sanctuary varies from riverine to mixed forest both in higher and lower elevation. Flora constitutes mainly Khair, Sisua, Simul, Sal, Kapasi, Cheeta Sal, Dhupi, among the herbs are Tinpati jhar, Gokleto among shrubs varieties of flokets species and various type of broad leaved plants.

Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary lies between 26° 94' and 27° 07' N and 88° 33' and 88° 23' E with an area of 38 sq. km. and elevation between 2000m and 2400m. This sanctuary contains the main catchment area of water supply of Darjeeling district. The forest cover of the sanctuary is compact block of both natural and man made plantation. The floral community consisted of various species of Oak, Birch, Pine,

Rhododendron, Dhupi, Mohonia, *Michelia sp.* and orchids.

Twelve days survey for search of goral yield very poor results, only 2(two) gorals were sighted at Mahananda WLS and one goral at Senchal WLS. Himalayan gorals live in small herds of five to eight while Lydekker (2005) reported that if one animal is sighted others are almost sure to occur. Pellets counts of both sanctuaries related that number of animals are more in number but difficult to put in figure. Pellets that were collected from the field were compared with those of the forest department collections and pellets size exactly matched with those samples of forest department ones. Present survey revealed that though gorals are inhabiting in both sanctuaries are rarely visible. Forest personnel of the field and local people who accompanied our survey party confirmed that gorals occasionally sighted in the

sanctuaries but reported us encounter of four to five gorals at a time is rare and chance factor, though the habitat is congenial for gorals. Duckworth and Mackinnon (2008), observed that gorals were hunted for meat, wool, antler and the population of the species are declining at a alarming rate. Anthropogenic activities, construction of road deep into the forest caused severe damage to the forests of Darjeeling's fragile ecosystems.

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