

PRESS RELEASE

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First record of Steppe polecat, Pallas's cat and Eurasian lynx outside the protected areas network in Nepal

Three species of wild carnivores have been newly recorded from Humla district, north-western Nepal. The Steppe polecat *Mustela eversmanii*, Pallas's cat *Otocolobus manul*, and Eurasian lynx *Lynx lynx* were documented from the Tibetan Plateau of Limi Valley in Upper Humla during July-September 2021, representing the first records of these species outside the protected areas network in Nepal.

The Steppe polecat record was obtained through a live observation while the records of Pallas's cat and Eurasian lynx were from camera trapping surveys. These findings were made during the field work of the research titled, 'Sustainable ecosystem protection: Conservation of the wildlife communities of Upper Humla through an understanding of wolf behaviour and local communities' by Himalayan Wolves Project/Resources Himalaya Foundation in collaboration with Department of Forests and Soil Conservation, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Division Forest Office, Humla, Namkha Rural Municipality, Humla and Green Governance Nepal.

The Steppe Polecat was recorded as a new species for Nepal from Annapurna Conservation Area (Upper Mustang) in 2014 and there has been no record of the species there after. This current record is the second record of the species for Nepal seven years later. Since the earlier records were night-time camera trap images, the current record represents the first live observation of the species in Nepal. More importantly it enriches the southernmost records of the species in Asia. Interestingly, the IUCN range map of the species does not include Nepal although it mentions Nepal as a country where the species is native. The Steppe polecat is assessed as **Data Deficient** in Nepal.

The Pallas's cat was also recorded as a new species for Nepal from Annapurna Conservation Area (Upper Manang) in 2012. It has also been recorded from Shey-Phoksundo National Park. Interestingly the current record represents the first family photo of the species in Nepal showing two adults with a cub. All previous records are of single individuals. The Pallas's cat is also assessed as **Data Deficient** in Nepal.

The Eurasian lynx is a **protected priority species** of Nepal according to the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1973. Confirmed records of the species in Nepal are available from Annapurna Conservation Area (Mustang), Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve and Shey-Phoksundo National Park (Dolpa). Local reports of Eurasian lynx in Upper Humla were documented as early as 2013 but those reports

required scientific verification. The current record provides the first conclusive evidence for Eurasian lynx in Upper Humla. The Eurasian lynx is assessed as **Vulnerable** in Nepal.

Records of Steppe polecat, Pallas's cat and Eurasian lynx from Upper Humla add to the fascinating diversity of wild mammals in the area. The Transhimalayan habitats in Upper Humla are home to the last remaining wild yaks of Nepal and is a stronghold of Tibetan wild ass/Kiang as the area supports the largest population of the species in the country. Other important wild mammals found in Upper Humla include Tibetan argali, Tibetan gazelle, Tibetan fox, Himalayan wolf, musk deer, and snow leopard. The present findings call for more dedicated conservation actions to protect the unique biodiversity of Upper Humla.

With the current records, Upper Humla represents the westernmost distribution range of the three species in Nepal.

All of these findings are being written up as formal scientific articles that shall be available soon.

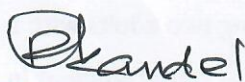
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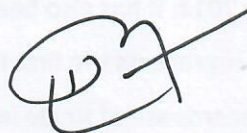
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Figure 1. The Steppe Polecat photographed in Upper Humla.

Photo: Naresh Kusi/ Himalayan Wolves Project/Resources Himalaya Foundation.



Figure 2. A Pallas's cat family camera trapped in Upper Humla.

Photo: Himalayan Wolves Project/Resources Himalaya Foundation/Green Governance Nepal.



Figure 3. Camera trap image of a Eurasian lynx from Upper Humla.

Photo: Himalayan Wolves Project/Resources Himalaya Foundation/Green Governance Nepal.