

Sightings of Javan Small-toothed Palm Civets *Arctogalidia trivirgata trilineata* on Gunung Salak, West Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

Eleven independent sightings of the Javan Small-toothed Palm Civet *Arctogalidia trivirgata trilineata* on Gunung Salak, West Java, Indonesia, are only the second series of records in recent decades. The animals were observed from January to October 2010 at altitudes between 900 and 1,450 m a.s.l., mainly as solitaires and once possibly as a group of three. An island-wide survey and an accurate taxonomic assessment are needed to help clarify the overall conservation status of this taxon, which remains one of the least-known larger mammals in Java.

Keywords: Gunung Halimun Salak National Park, spotlighting, survey, Viverridae

Catatan perjumpaan *Arctogalidia trivirgata trilineata* di Gunung Salak, Jawa Barat, Indonesia

Abstrak

Sebelas kali perjumpaan independen musang akar *Arctogalidia trivirgata trilineata* di Gunung Salak, Jawa Barat, Indonesia merupakan catatan lapang kedua dalam beberapa dekade terakhir. Semua perjumpaan antara Bulan Januari sampai Juni 2010 berada pada ketinggian antara 900 dan 1450 dpl terdiri dari satu individu, kecuali satu kali yang tampaknya dalam grup berjumlah tiga ekor. Perlu dilakukan survey menyeluruh di Pulau Jawa untuk mengetahui status konservasi dari salah satu jenis mamalia yang paling jarang diketahui ini.

Kata kunci: spotlighting, survey, Taman Nasional Gunung Halimun Salak, Viverridae

A paucity of information regarding the Javan Small-toothed Palm Civet *Arctogalidia trivirgata trilineata*, a taxon restricted in its known distribution to the westernmost part of the island of Java, Indonesia, renders its current conservation status unclear (Eaton *et al.* 2010). The only documented recent sightings in decades occurred between 2008 and 2010 in the Gunung Halimun Salak National Park, West Java, prompting the urgency to publicise other contemporary records (Robson 2008, Eaton *et al.* 2010). From January to June 2010, we conducted 50 km of nocturnal surveys over 100 hours on the north face of Gunung (Mount) Salak (6°41'S, 106°44'E), part of the same national park. The surveys covered an area of approximately 18 km². Spotlight reconnaissance surveys were employed to assess the presence or absence of Javan Slow Loris *Nycticebus javanicus* for the purposes of a re-introduction programme; however, chance sightings of other nocturnal mammals were also recorded. In addition, five months of night monitoring of reintroduced lorises, totalling approximately 800 hours from June to October 2010, meant substantial time was spent in that area. Animals were located by their eye-shine using Petzl zoom halogen lamps with red filters (as per Nekaris 2003). To help identify the animals, a Sony Handycam DCR-SR35E with a night-shot function was used. In general, views of Small-toothed Palm Civets were excellent, allowing confident identification, and photographs were circulated to J. A. Eaton and others, who concurred with the identifications. These photographs did not allow precise assessment of pelage colour.

Eleven separate sightings of Javan Small-toothed Palm Civets were recorded on Gunung Salak. During the initial survey period, the species was seen four times, being found on only two of the eleven 3 km trails; these two trails were spaced approximately 700 m apart. The subsequent monitoring period yielded a further seven sightings. All eleven sightings were within a 4 km² area of

forest where approximately 70% of our total time (in the 18 km² block) was spent. Whilst Small-toothed Palm Civets were never observed outside this area, this may only be a reflection of limited survey effort in the remaining 14 km².

Sightings occurred between altitudes of 900 m and 1,450 m a.s.l. at various times between 20h00 and 04h00, and were mostly of solitary animals. Once, a group of three individuals were observed playing for a 15-minute period high in a large tree, then moving off together. One animal was a Small-toothed Palm Civet, but the others were seen too poorly for secure identification. All civets were seen at heights of 1–12 m in the trees, never on the ground. One was watched feeding on the fruits of *Cinnamomum sintoc* for approximately two minutes only three meters from the observer. In September 2010, whilst monitoring a released slow loris, a Small-toothed Palm Civet was observed close to the slow loris and appeared to be following it. Both animals disappeared from sight, moving higher up in the canopy. A few minutes later the loris was seen fleeing from the scene exhibiting a large facial wound. It is uncertain whether this wound was caused from an attack by the civet, as the event was not witnessed. No other animals were seen in the area at that time, although, owing to the cryptic nature of many nocturnal species, an attack from another unnoticed species cannot be ruled out.

These recent sightings on Gunung Salak were approximately 23 km northeast of those documented by Robson (2008) and Eaton *et al.* (2010) at Cikaniki in the Gunung Halimun Salak National Park. Cikaniki lies at 1,000 m a.s.l., consistent with the altitudinal range of the Gunung Salak records. At such altitudes, forest cover in Java is significantly greater compared with the level lowlands (Lavigne & Gunnell 2006); further sightings here perhaps imply better survival prospects for this taxon than would be the case for one dependent on lowland forest. Although Gunung Salak

is within a protected area and, therefore, should not be entered without permission, in all areas of our study, we made frequent encounters with hunters, loggers, and locals collecting the foliage of *Calliandra calothyrsus* for their livestock. Consequently, the forest areas near to villages are relatively disturbed, with many invasive and non-native plant species present. The civet sightings occurred approximately 3 km from established villages, and thus fell within this human-influenced area. Without proper policing of these areas, gradual degradation of the flora and fauna on Gunung Salak is likely to continue. Hunters encountered during the day in the National Park were mainly trapping birds, using lime sticks and live bird decoys, or shooting small mammals with air rifles. Four ground snares were also found. On only one occasion were hunters seen at night, using spotlights and accompanied by dogs; it is not known what they were hunting. Since Small-toothed Palm Civets are highly arboreal, it is possible neither snares nor dogs constitute much threat.

Further studies of the ecology and behaviour of Small-toothed Palm Civet in this area would help in assessing the potential threats in this region. Perhaps of greater immediate importance to the taxon's survival, however, is the need to survey for Javan Small-toothed Palm Civet across Java in order to reveal the extent of its geographical range. This report combined with the only other recent sightings (Robson 2008, Eaton *et al.* 2010), from a single site a relatively short distance away, could suggest this taxon has a localised distribution and is, therefore, potentially susceptible to habitat loss or disturbance. Alternatively, as Eaton *et al.* (2010) proposed, a paucity of sightings could be attributed to a paucity of published spotlight surveys in Java, and the taxon may be more widespread than the records suggest. Obtaining such information,

together with an accurate taxonomic placement as either a separate species of *Arctogalidia* or remaining as a subspecies of *A. trivirgata*, would help to provide a better understanding regarding current conservation priorities for Javan Small-toothed Palm Civets.

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