



# BLANFORD'S RAT

## New distribution records of Blanford's Rat *Madromys blanfordi* (Thomas, 1881) from Gujarat state, Western India



White-tailed Wood Rat (*Madromys blanfordi*) sighted from Vansda National Park

IUCN Red List:  
Least Concern  
(Molur & Nameer 2016)

**Class : Mammals**

**Order : Rodentia**

**Family : Muridae**

***Madromys blanfordi***  
[White-tailed Wood Rat]

Species described by  
Thomas in 1881

Blanford's Rat or White-tailed Wood Rat, *Madromys blanfordi* (Thomas, 1881) is an endemic South Asian rodent, widely distributed in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (Molur et al. 2005). This rodent is fairly common in evergreen forests and fragments in Southern Western Ghats (Chadrsekhar-Rao and Sunquist 1996; Shankar 1998), also known to occur in tropical and subtropical dry deciduous and scrub forests, moist deciduous and evergreen forests of Peninsular India. It is nocturnal, terrestrial, sometimes fossorial species; it is seen in rocky areas, caves, crevices, tree hollows and sub-terrenean habitats. In southern India, it lives mostly in forest, but also in the more open parts of Mysore; it has colonized scrub jungle, whilst

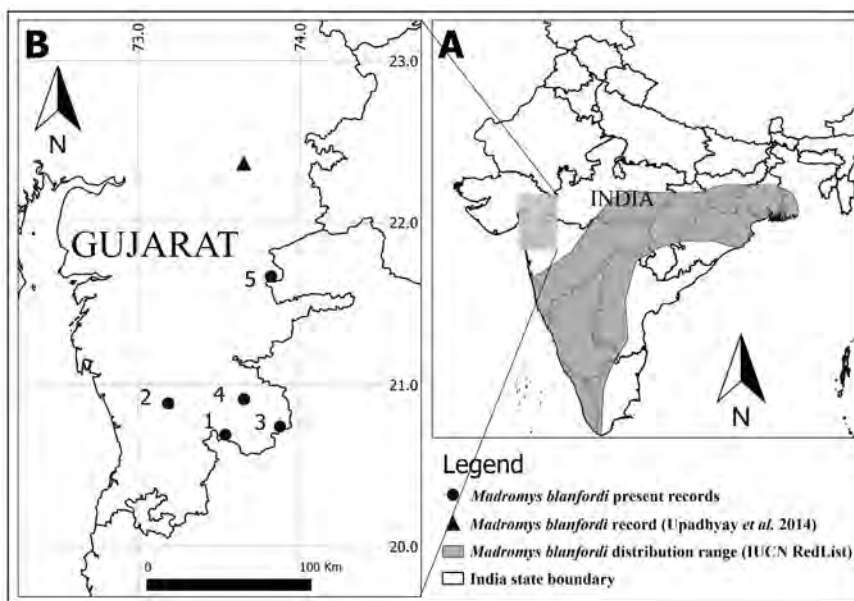


further north in Madhya Pradesh, it lives among rocks on bare hill sides. In forests, this rat is to a great extent arboreal. In open treeless country it makes home in caves or under rocks and bushes (Molur et al. 2005).

The species has distinguished physical characteristics among other rodents and widely distributed in South Asia, the occurrence of this species has been well documented from Peninsular India south of Gujarat. In India the species is known to occur from the states- Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal (Srinivasulu & Srinivasulu

**Global Distribution:**

Native: Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka



**A. Shaded area indicates the distribution range of *M. blanfordi*. B. black circles indicate the new locations of *M. blanfordi* (1. Vansda National Park, 2. Bodwank village, 3. Chinchali Village, 4. Purna Wildlife Sanctuary, 5. Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary), and black triangle indicates the location observed by Upadhyay et al. (2014, Jambudhoda Wildlife Sanctuary)**

2012); in Bangladesh from Sathira, and in Sri Lanka from Southern and Eastern Province (Molur & Nameer 2008). Recently, the species has been recorded from Jambughoda Wildlife Sanctuary, Gujarat, India (Upadhyay et al. 2014), which was the first record of this species from the state of Gujarat.

Our recent opportunistic surveys in south eastern Gujarat, has yielded additional locality records for this species.

Here we present our own observations and five new distribution records of *M. blanfordi* from parts of Gujarat state.

### Vansda National Park, Navsari, Gujarat.

On 30th July 2015 at 23:32hrs, we observed a rodent on the tree at about the height 15 ft in the premises of Kilad Nature Education Campsite (20°45'13.68"N & 73°29'14.33"E). We photographed it and observed that the relatively longer tail with brown colored of three quarters of its length, but the terminal portion is clothed with longer white hairs. Its soft long fur was grey brown above and white on the underside. These physical features



are characteristic of *Madromys blanfordi* (Blanford's Madromys or White-tailed Wood Rat) (Agrawal 2000; Musser and Carleton in Wilson and Reeder, 2005; Prater 2005). The entire forest area of the Vansda National Park is of the 3B/C2 Southern moist mixed deciduous forest, 5/E 9 dry bamboo brakes, 5/1S1 tropical riverine forest (Champion & Seth 1968).

**White-tailed Wood Rat (*Madromys blanfordi*) near a tree hole of a *Madhuca indica* at Purna Wildlife Sanctuary**

**Bodwank Village, Navsari, Gujarat.**

On 20<sup>th</sup> November 2015, during a night trail at around 21:30hrs, two of us (H.P. and V.N.) observed a *M. blanfordi* foraging in the teak plantation near Bodwank village (20°53'5.66"N & 73°11'12.09"E). Disturbed from our movements, it swiftly started climbing on a nearby teak tree and disappeared in a tree hole at around 20 ft. This region is predominantly an agricultural landscape with very few forest patches remaining.

#### **Chinchali Village, Dang, Gujarat.**

During the Dang Vulture Census on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2016, the first author observed a rodent at 22:32hrs near Chinchali village (20°44'30.40"N & 73°52'40.94"E), which was foraging in leaf litter. On close inspection, it was identified as *M. blanfordi*. This village is situated at Gujarat – Maharashtra border with open, almost treeless country, patchy 3B/C2 southern moist mixed deciduous forests and hilly sides (Champion & Seth 1968).

#### **Purna Wildlife Sanctuary, Dang, Gujarat.**

On 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2016 at around 21:48hrs, while returning to the Mahal eco-tourism site (20°54'39.91"N & 73°39'19.60"E), we observed *M. blanfordi* crossing the road and went to a tree hole of a *Madhuca indica*. Champion and Seth in 1966 had categorized the forest area of Purna Wildlife Sanctuary in two main categories south Indian moist deciduous forests and southern dry deciduous forest.



### Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary, Gujarat.

On 5<sup>th</sup> November 2016 at 20:46hrs, we observed a *M. blanfordi* at Ninai water-fall (21°40'0.01"N & 73°49'19.99"E). An adult of *M. blanfordi* was foraging on the steps near the water fall and retreated in the bushes when approached. Forest of Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary is classified as 3B/C1b moist teak forests, 3B/C1c southern moist mixed deciduous forest, 5/DS1 dry deciduous scrub, 5/E9 dry bamboo brakes, 5/1S1 dry tropical riverine forest (Champion & Seth 1968).

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#### **Kaushal Patel<sup>1</sup>, Vaibhav Naik<sup>2</sup> & Harshil Patel<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>07, Shiv Shakti Society, Deshra-Bhatha road, Bilimora-396321, Gujarat, India. Email: kaushalgpate14@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Valsad Pardi, Gopi Street, Valsad-396001, India. Email: vaibhavdesai09@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup>Department of Biosciences, Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, Surat-395007, Gujarat, India. Email: harshilpatel121@gmail.com (Corresponding author)

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