

## Distribution record of Yellow-throated Marten from Rani-Garbhangha Reserve Forest, Assam, India

The Yellow-throated Marten *Martes flavigula* Boddaert 1785 (Mammalia: Carnivora: Mustelidae) is a wide-ranging carnivore distributed from Pakistan and Afghanistan in the west to far east Russia, and Indonesia in the east (Corbett & Hill 1992). In India, the Yellow-throated Marten is distributed in the forested regions of western and eastern Himalaya from Kashmir to Arunachal Pradesh, chiefly in the valleys at high and moderate elevations (Bahuguna & Mallick 2010). Its occurrence in the entire Kanchenjunga transboundary conservation landscape (eastern Nepal, western Bhutan, Sikkim and Darjeeling in India) has been reported by Chettri & Sharma (2006). It is also recorded from West Bengal (Srinivasulu & Srinivasulu 2012), Nagaland (Choudhury 2000), and Manipur (Ramakantha 1994), Garo Hills as well as in Balpakram National Park of Meghalaya (Kumar et al. 2002). In Assam, a handful records can be seen on the



Yellow-throated Marten *Martes flavigula* in Rani-Garbhangha Reserve Forest, Assam, India. © Ranjit Kakati.

India Biodiversity Portal (Vijay Anand Ismavel on 1 April 2012 from Karimganj District, Assam; Jitendra Kumar Sarmah on 31 March 2018 from Bhimashankar Road, Pamohi, Guwahati, Assam and another one by Tanbeer Ahmed on 09 August 2020 at Manas National Park, Assam). However, no record of it are there from Rani-Garbhangha Reserve, which hosts an unique assemblage of wildlife and habitat in western Assam. We observed this species during a visit to the Kopili River of Rani-Garbhangha Reserve Forest on 21 March

2017. While walking along a trail on the sides of a stream, seven individuals of Yellow-throated Marten were spotted. The Martens were divided into two groups, one consisting of five individuals and the other consisted of two individuals. The vegetation was dense and dominated by bamboos but the Yellow-throated Martens could be easily distinguished because of their bright yellow colour. One group (five individuals) was very close to the stream, foraging and the second group (two individuals) were up on a hill nearby. The two

groups were observed for about an hour after which they left the riverside and disappeared into the undergrowth. Still photographs, videos and indirect shreds of evidence were collected.

According to IUCN, the Yellow-throated Marten is abundant and widespread throughout its range but no overall population estimate is available. Currently, this species is classified as Least Concern (LC) on the IUCN Red List but its numbers today are decreasing.

Detection of the shy and elusive Yellow-throated Marten in the field is rare because of vegetation density at the understorey level. However, if sighted, this larger Marten is sharply differentiated from the smaller Beech Marten by contrasting marks of the larger head and throat, unique blend of black, white, golden-yellow and brown, relatively short fur and a longer tail (Mallick 2015).

Yellow-throated Marten is mostly diurnal in the undisturbed forests but becomes nocturnal near the human habitations. They mark their range with feces and urine and often defecates in the open areas and prominent places like stone. It is predominantly a carnivore preying on the smaller ungulates, primates, rodents, reptiles, and birds. It forages for fruits in trees in both the lower and upper reaches of the canopy and on the ground (Mallick 2015). More scientific investigation including monitoring of the habitats of Yellow-throated Marten in the entire Assam area is necessary to know more about its ecological significance and conservational threats to this overlooked species.

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