

First photographic record of Indian Grey Wolf in Birbhum District, West Bengal, India

The Indian subcontinent is the home of two subspecies of wolves, the Indian Wolf or Indian Grey Wolf *Canis lupus pallipes*, widely ranging over most of peninsular India, and the Tibetan Wolf *Canis lupus chanco* inhabiting the trans-Himalayan region (Wildlife Institute of India 2018). Indian Grey Wolf was once considered one of India's most widespread land mammals. However, owing to land use and land pattern changes, its population is shrinking sharply due to the loss of suitable habitats (Sheldon 1992). Thus, this species is listed as a Schedule I species in the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act of 2022. This species is found across arid, semi-arid forest patches, open plains, grasslands, and vast agricultural fields and deserts. In eastern India, they mostly prefer dry deciduous forest patches and open forest plains, grasslands, scrublands, and agricultural lands (Saren et al. 2019). Additionally, due to the loss of natural prey base, a considerable shift in their dietary preferences towards



Photograph of the female Indian Grey Wolf taken at Birbhum district.
© Saikat Das.



Study site where the photographs were taken. © Manish Kumar Chattopadhyay.

domestic livestock is visible throughout India, which can instigate retaliatory hunting. Nowadays, the conservation of this apex predator species is prioritized throughout India as it plays several vital roles in maintaining ecological integrity.

Jhala et al. (2022) meticulously studied the status of Grey Wolves in India, and that study recorded nearly 3,300 wolves in India, with Madhya Pradesh harboring the highest population, followed by Rajasthan. Saren et al. (2019) also did a wide-ranging survey

on the richness of Indian wolves in three districts of West Bengal, namely Bankura, Purulia, and West Midnapore, and encountered 11 wolves. Biswas et al. (2008) mentioned that this species is restricted to only small pockets of southern West Bengal, primarily due to habitat loss. However, no previous record about the distribution of Grey Wolves from the Birbhum District was prevalent.

During a field visit in February of 2024, authors found and successfully photographed a female Indian Grey Wolf strolling through the agricultural fields of Paschim Bahadurpur (23.65623N, 87.62967E) village of Birbhum District at around 1450 h. The individual photographed had sandy brown fur, well-developed nipples, and a long tail. This species was identified from field guides (Menon 2014). The dog-like appearance, large head, higher leg length to body ratio, elongated muzzle, and slightly curved tail were good indicators of the species. This is the first photographic evidence of this species from Birbhum District.

Our study has confirmed the presence of the Indian Grey Wolf in the Birbhum District, and this baseline information will surely encourage more detailed studies on the abundance and behaviour of this apex predator of pastoral ecosystems. This species mainly resides outside the protected area networks near human settlements. Meticulous information on their distributions and abundance will aid in framing future management and conservation strategies for the species.

References

Biswas, K.K., P.C. Saren & D. Basu (2008). Mammalian and avian fauna of some selected areas of Purulia district, West Bengal. *Records of Zoological Survey of India* 108(3): 59–76.

Jhala, Y., S. Saini, S. Kumar & Q. Qureshi (2022). Distribution, Status, and Conservation of the Indian Peninsular Wolf. *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution* 10:814966.

Menon, V. (2014). *Indian Mammals-A Field Guide*. Hachette Book Publishing India Pvt. Ltd., Gurgaon, 528 pp.

Saren, P.C., D. Basu & T. Mukherjee (2019). Status survey of Indian Grey Wolf *Canis lupus pallipes* in West Bengal and some parts of Jharkhand. *Records of Zoological Survey of India* 119(2): 103–110.

Sheldon, J.W. (1992). *Wild dogs: The natural history of non-domestic Canidae*. Academic Press Inc. USA, 248 pp.

Wildlife Institute of India (2018). *National Studbook of Indian Wolf Canis lupus pallipes II Edition*. Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun and Central Zoo Authority, New Delhi. TR.No. 2018/30, 90pp.

Saikat Das¹, Manish Kumar Chattopadhyay², Subhadeep Saha³, Sandip Chakraborty⁴, Banideep Sinha⁵ & Arkajyoti Mukherjee⁶

¹Patha Bhavana, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, Birbhum, West Bengal 731235, India.

²Maulana Abul Kalam Azad University of Technology, Kolkata, West Bengal 700064, India.

³Wildlife Information and Nature Guide Society, Durgapur, Paschim Barddhaman, West Bengal 713214, India.

^{4&5}Suri Vidyasagar College, Burdwan University, Suri, Birbhum, West Bengal 731101, India.

⁶Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, West Bengal 721302, India.

Emails: ¹saikatgkh@gmail.com, ²manish.ee22@gmail.com (corresponding author), ³subhadeepdugapur95@gmail.com, ⁴Sandip.chakshine@gmail.com, ⁵banideep72@gmail.com, ⁶arkajyoti02@gmail.com

Citation: Das, S., M.K. Chattopadhyay, S.Saha, S. Chakraborty, B. Sinha & A. Mukherjee (2025). First photographic record of Indian Grey Wolf in Birbhum District, West Bengal, India. *Mammal Tales* #56, In: *Zoo's Print* 40(2): 16–17.