

Sighting of Lynx (*Lynx lynx isabellinus*) in Hemis National Park, Ladakh

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There are 6 subspecies of Eurasian Lynx (*Lynx lynx*) known to occur in Europe and North-central Asia. The subspecies of Eurasian Lynx found within the political boundaries of India is known as Central Asian Lynx (*Lynx lynx isabellinus*). It is distributed all across Central Asia. Unlike its European relatives which inhabit well wooded areas, the Central Asian Lynx is found in barren, relatively open, rocky mountainous plateau of Central Asia (Roberts, 1977, Nowell and Jackson, 1996). It is sparsely distributed all over its range and sightings are very rare.

In India lynx haven been reported from various parts of Ladakh e.g. Chang Chenmo area (Ward, 1921), Nubra valley (Chundawat, 1990), Changthang (Osborne *et al.* 1983, Mallon, 1991), Gya-Miru wildlife sanctuary (Namgail, 2003) and Hemis National Park (Fox *et al.* 1986). Though lynx usually occur in northern slopes of Himalayas, there has been one reported case of a lynx from southern slope of Himalayas from Dhaulagiri region of Nepal (Fox, 1985).

We had a good sighting of two adult and one sub adult lynx together, near Ganda-la base which is at an elevation of 4900 meter, in Hemis National Park, Ladakh, during our fieldwork on Snow leopards in February 2004 (Dutta & Sharma, 2004).

The two adults lynx were moving closer and following each other, while the sub-adult lynx was a little far from the adults. We could follow them with our spotting scope for about one hour. Initially they were moving along the ridgeline of the mountain then they came down on the southern slope of mountain, which was interspersed with *Caragana* bushes.

Lynx primarily feed on small ungulates, hares, rodents and birds, but also on livestock (Nowell and Jackson, 1996). Livestock depredation brings them in direct conflict with the herders and sometimes they also suffer due to herders' retribution. The ecological information of this rare cat species, which is the second largest feline species of Ladakh Trans-himalayas after the Snow leopard, is very

scanty and limited only to a few sighting records. There is an urgent need of a detailed study of its ecology for effective conservation of this elusive cat in the Transhimalayan region of India.

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