

## CHECKLIST OF LAGOMORPHS (MAMMALIA: LAGOMORPHA) OF SOUTH ASIA

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### Abstract

A checklist of 14 species of lagomorphs belonging to three genera in two families, namely, Leporidae Fischer, 1817 (with five species in two genera) and Ochotonidae Thomas, 1897 (with nine species in one genus) known to occur in South Asia including India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka is provided.

### Keywords

*Checklist, Leporidae, Ochotonidae, Lagomorpha, Mammalia, South Asia*

### Introduction

The lagomorphs have for long been classified along with the rodents due to their close affinities. Earlier works including that of Linnaeus (1758) and Illiger (1811) did not clearly separate these two groups. Subsequent workers (including Waterhouse, 1842; Gervais, 1849; and Brandt, 1855) continued this trend but have also indicated the variations between the two groups at various levels. Simpson (1945) briefly traces the jagged history of lagomorph taxonomy and remarks that it was Lilljeborg (1866) and subsequent authors who treated lagomorphs separately from rodents. Gidley (1912) proposed the name Order *Lagomorpha* Brandt, 1855 to include taxa that were earlier classified along with rodents under Order *Duplicidentata* Illiger, 1811. Later, Dice (1929) detailed about the sub family level categorization in family *Leporidae* Fischer, 1817 that was later rearranged by Burke (1941). The taxonomy of the family *Ochotonidae* Thomas, 1897 witnessed many changes over a period of time.

Detailed accounts of lagomorphs of the Indian subcontinent is available in Blyth (1863), Jerdon, (1874), Sterndale (1884), and Blanford (1891). As mentioned earlier, the last few decades

witnessed numerous taxonomic advances with respect to lagomorphs (Forsyth, 1899; Lyon, 1904; Kloss, 1918; Ellerman & Morrison-Scott, 1951; Gureev, 1964; Corbet & Hill, 1980, 1986, 1991, 1992; Corbet, 1983; Angermann *et al.*, 1990; Smith *et al.*, 1990; Flux & Angermann, 1990; Hoffmann, 1993; Yu *et al.*, 2000). Recent checklists on Indian mammals (Nameer, 1998; Alfred *et al.*, 2002) do not include all the South Asian taxa. Keeping this in view, and also considering non-existence of an updated checklist on lagomorphs of South Asia, we attempt to put together one such for this region including information on their synonyms, subspecies and distribution.

### Methods

Like the earlier checklist on murids of South Asia prepared by Srinivasulu and Pradhan (2003), the present work also relies heavily on three major works, namely Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951), Corbet and Hill (1992), and Hoffmann (1993), and also a list prepared by Dr. Mike Jordan. We reviewed the major works by Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951, 1953); Phillips (1980); Chapman and Flux (1990); Corbet and Hill (1991, 1992); Hoffmann (1993); Roberts (1997) and Nowak (1999) to gain insights on the current taxonomic status of the lagomorphs occurring in the region. Besides these, we also referred numerous sources for information including Blyth (1863), Jerdon (1874), Anderson (1881), Sterndale (1884), Sclater (1891), Thomas (1922), Allen (1938), Bell *et al.* (1970), Abe (1971, 1982), Kawamichi (1971), Agrawal and Chakraborty (1971), Hassinger (1973), Mitchell (1975, 1978, 1981), Chakraborty (1975, 1983), Ghose (1978), Oliver (1978), Bell (1986), Angermann (1983).

Deriving information from above listed sources, we have listed the species of lagomorphs known to occur in South Asia including India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. This paper follows Srinivasulu and Pradhan (2003) for scientific names, synonyms and distribution informations in

South Asia. This list is based on the best of the present knowledge on lagomorph diversity of the region to date.

## Results

A total of 14 species of wild lagomorphs belonging to three genera of two families are recorded from South Asia. Five species belong to family *Leporidae* Fischer, 1817, and nine species belong to family *Ochotonidae* Thomas, 1897 (Table 1).

Of this diversity, only one species, namely *Caprolagus hispidus* (Pearson, 1839) is endemic to South Asia. Interestingly, no insular endemic lagomorph is known from the region.

The present known lagomorph diversity on record from South Asia is listed below. The synonyms provided are those applicable for the South Asian region. We have not listed extra-limital synonyms that may be valid for some taxon elsewhere.

### Family: *Leporidae* Fischer, 1817

Corbet (1983) reviewed the genera belonging to this family. It is represented by five species in two genera, namely *Lepus* Linnaeus, 1758 and *Caprolagus* Blyth, 1845 in the region.

### Genus *Lepus* Linnaeus, 1758

#### Hares and rabbits

Simpson (1945) treated this genus under subfamily *Leporinae* Trouessart, 1880 in family *Leporidae* Fischer, 1817. Subsequent authors do not recognize subfamily categorization (Ellerman & Morrison-Scott, 1951; Corbet, 1983). Hoffmann (1993) opines that the taxonomy of this genus remains controversial. This genus is widespread in North America, Africa and Eurasia. This genus is represented by four species in the region.

#### 1. *Lepus capensis* Linnaeus, 1758

1758. *Lepus capensis* Linnaeus, Syst. Nat. 10<sup>th</sup> ed., 1: 58.

Name: Cape Hare

Type locality: Cape of Good Hope, South Africa

Synonyms: *Lepus arabicus* Ehrenberg, 1833  
*Lepus tibetanus* Waterhouse, 1841

Subspecies: *Lepus capensis tibetanus* Waterhouse, 1841

Distribution: Jammu & Kashmir and Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir in India; Pakistan.

Comments: Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951) treated *Lepus arabicus* Erhenberg, 1833 distinct from *Lepus capensis* Linnaeus, 1758 a trend followed by many authors. However, Hoffmann (1993) synonymized the former name with the latter following Corbet (1978), Angermann (1983) and, Harrison and Bates (1991). Gromov and Baranova (1981) included *Lepus tibetanus* Waterhouse, 1841 under *Lepus tolai* Pallas, 1778 that is presently considered as a distinct species (Hoffmann, 1993) unlike treated earlier as subspecies of *Lepus capensis* Linnaeus, 1758 by Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951). Sokolov and Orlov (1980) treated *Lepus tibetanus* Waterhouse, 1841 as a distinct

**Table 1. Species diversity of Order Lagomorpha in South Asia**

Family	Genus	No. of Species	Remarks
Leporidae	<i>Lepus</i>	4	Regional endemic
	<i>Caprolagus</i>	1	
Ochotonidae	<i>Ochotona</i>	9	

species. Chakraborty (1977, 1983) reported the occurrence of *Lepus arabicus* Erhenberg, 1833 basing on a specimen collected in Jammu and Kashmir.

#### 2. *Lepus nigricollis* Cuvier, 1823

1823. *Lepus nigricollis* Cuvier, Dict. Sci. Nat., 26: 307.

Name: Black-naped Hare/Indian Hare

Type locality: Madras, India

Synonyms: *Lepus nigricollis* Cuvier, 1823  
*Lepus ruficaudatus* Geoffroy, I., 1826  
*Lepus macrotus* Hodgson, 1840  
*Lepus aryabatensis* Hodgson, 1844 (*nom. nud.*)  
*Lepus tytleri* Tytler, 1854  
*Lepus dayanus* Blanford, 1874  
*Lepus joongshaiensis* Murray, 1854  
*Lepus simcoxi* Wroughton, 1912  
*Lepus mahadeva* Wroughton & Ryley, 1913  
*Lepus singhala* Wroughton, 1915  
*Lepus rajput* Wroughton, 1918  
*Lepus cutchensis* Kloss, 1918  
*Lepus sadiya* Kloss, 1918

Subspecies: *Lepus nigricollis nigricollis* Cuvier, 1823  
*Lepus nigricollis ruficaudatus* Geoffroy, I., 1826  
*Lepus nigricollis dayanus* Blanford, 1874

Distribution: Throughout India; Pakistan; Bangladesh; Sri Lanka; Nepal; probably also in Bhutan.

Comments: Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951), and, Corbet and Hill (1992) treated the taxon *singhala* Wroughton, 1915 as a subspecies of *Lepus nigricollis* Cuvier, 1823. However, it is treated as a synonym by Hoffmann (1993).

#### 3. *Lepus oiostolus* Hodgson, 1840

1840. *Lepus oiostolus* Hodgson, J. Asiat. Soc. Bengal., 9: 1186.

Name: Woolly Hare

Type locality: Southern Tibet, Xizang, China

Synonyms: *Lepus oiostolus* Hodgson, 1840  
*Lepus pallipes* Hodgson, 1842  
*Lepus hypsibius* Blanford, 1875

Subspecies: None.

Distribution: Ladakh and Sikkim in India, Nepal and probably also in Bhutan.

Comments: None.

#### 4. *Lepus tolai* Pallas, 1778

1778. *Lepus tolai* Pallas, Nova. Spec. Quad. Glir. Ord. p 17.

Name: Tolai Hare

Type locality: valley of Selenga River, Russia

Synonyms: ? *Lepus biddulphi* Blanford, 1877

Subspecies: None.

Distribution: Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir in India.

Comments: The present status of its distribution in the region is unknown. Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951) considered *Lepus tolai* Pallas, 1778 as subspecies of *Lepus capensis* Linnaeus, 1758 that was later synonymized by Corbet (1978). However, in the recent years these two are considered specifically distinct (Hoffmann, 1993). We put on record this taxon from India following the record of *Lepus biddulphi* Blanford, 1877 described basing on a specimen collected from Yasin, Gilgit in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir. This taxon had been earlier synonymized with *Lepus capensis tibetanus* Waterhouse, 1871 by Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951) but later has been synonymized with *Lepus tolai* Pallas, 1778 by Hoffmann (1993).

#### Genus *Caprolagus* Blyth, 1845

A monotypic genus restricted in distribution to South Asia.

#### 5. *Caprolagus hispidus* (Pearson, 1839)

1839. *Lepus hispidus* Pearson, In M'Clellnad, Proc.Zool. Soc.London, 1838: 152 (1839).

Name: Hispid Hare/Assam Rabbit

Type locality: North Assam, India

Synonyms: *Lepus hispidus* Pearson, 1839

Subspecies: None

Distribution: Endemic to the region. Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Assam in India; Nepal; Bangladesh; probably also in Bhutan.

Comments: Monotypic.

#### Family: *Ochotonidae* Thomas, 1897

#### Genus *Ochotona* Link, 1795

##### Pikas

Yu *et al.* (2000) worked out the molecular systematics of this genus. Two subgenus, namely *Ochotona* Link, 1795 and *Pika* Lacépède, 1799 are recognized. This genus is widespread and recorded in hilly areas of Eurasia and western North America. It is represented by nine species in two subgenera in the region.

#### 6. *Ochotona curzoniae* (Hodgson, 1858)

1858. *Lagomys curzoniae* Hodgson, J. Asiat. Soc. Bengal, 26: 207.

Name: Black-lipped/Plateau Pika

Type locality: Chumbi Valley, S. Tibet, China

Synonyms: *Lagomys curzoniae* Hodgson, 1858

*Ochotona dauurica curzoniae* (Hodgson, 1858)

Subspecies: None.

Distribution: Sikkim in India; East Nepal.

Comments: Belongs to subgenus *Ochotona* Link, 1795. Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951), and Mitchell (1978) treated this taxon as a subspecies of *Ochotona dauurica* Pallas, 1776. However, Hoffmann (1993) treated the above mentioned taxa separately basing on Vorontsov and Ivanitsakaya (1973), and, Zhou and Xia (1981).

#### 7. *Ochotona forresti* Thomas, 1923

1923. *Ochotona forresti* Thomas, Ann. Mag. nat. Hist., 11: 662.

Name: Forrest's Pika

Type locality: North-western flank, Likiang range, China

Synonyms: *Ochotona forresti* Thomas, 1923

*Ochotona pusilla forresti* Thomas, 1923

*Ochotona roylei forresti* Thomas, 1923

*Ochotona thibetana forresti* Thomas, 1923

Subspecies: None.

Distribution: Assam, Sikkim in India; Bhutan; East Nepal.

Comments: Belongs to subgenus *Ochotona* Link, 1795. Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951) treated this taxon as a subspecies of *Ochotona pusilla* Pallas, 1769. Corbet (1978) included it under *Ochotona roylei* (Ogilby, 1839), while Gureev (1964) included it under *Ochotona thibetana* (Milne-Edwards, 1871). However, Hoffmann (1993) treated this taxon as a distinct species following Smith *et al.* (1990).

#### 8. *Ochotona himalayana* Feng, 1973

1973. *Ochotona himalayana* Feng, Acta Zool. Sinica, 19: 69,73.

Name: Himalayan Pika

Type locality: Shigaste, Xizang, China

Synonyms: *Ochotona himalayana* Feng, 1973

*Ochotona roylei himalayana* Feng, 1973

Subspecies: None.

Distribution: Nepal.

Comments: Belongs to subgenus *Ochotona* Link, 1795. Corbet (1978) and Weston (1982) treated this taxon as a subspecies of *Ochotona roylei* (Ogilby, 1839). However, studies by Feng and Zheng (1985) and Feng *et al.* (1986) show that *Ochotona himalayana* Feng, 1973 may be a distinct species a notion followed by Hoffmann (1993).

#### 9. *Ochotona ladacensis* (Günther, 1875)

1875. *Lagomys ladacensis* Günther, Ann. Mag. nat. Hist., (4)16: 231.

Name: Ladakh Pika

Type locality: Changra lake, Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir, India

Synonyms: *Lagomys ladacensis* Günther, 1875

Subspecies: None.

Distribution: Jammu & Kashmir and Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir in India and Pakistan.

Comments: Belongs to subgenus *Pika* Lacépède, 1799. Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951) and subsequent authors treated it as a distinct species.

**10. *Ochotona macrotis* (Günther, 1875)**1875. *Lagomys macrotis* Günther, Ann. Mag. nat. Hist., (4)16: 231.Name: Large-eared PikaType locality: Doba, C. Tibet, ChinaSynonyms: *Lagomys macrotis* Günther, 1875*Lagomys auritus* Blanford, 1875*Lagomys griseus* Blanford, 1875*Ochotona wollastoni* Thomas & Hinton, 1922*Ochotona roylei baltina* Thomas, 1922Subspecies: *Ochotona macrotis macrotis* Günther, 1875*Ochotona macrotis wollastoni* Thomas & Hinton, 1922Distribution: Jammu & Kashmir and Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir in India; Bhutan; Nepal; Pakistan.Comments: Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951) list two subspecies from the region. Gureev (1964), Corbet (1978) and Roberts (1997) listed it under *Ochotona roylei* (Ogilby, 1839), while Hoffmann (1993) following Weston (1982) and Feng *et al.* (1986) consider it as a distinct species. The taxon *Ochotona roylei baltina* Thomas, 1922 has been synonymized with *Ochotona macrotis* following Hoffmann (1993).**11. *Ochotona nubrica* Thomas, 1922**1922. *Ochotona nubrica* Thomas, Ann. Mag. nat. Hist., (9)9: 187.Name: Nubra PikaType locality: Tuggur, Nubra Valley, Ladak, Jammu & Kashmir, IndiaSynonyms: *Lagomys hodgsoni* Blyth, 1841*Ochotona pusilla nubrica* Thomas, 1922Subspecies: None.Distribution: Jammu & Kashmir in India; Nepal; Bhutan.Comments: Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951) treated this taxon as a subspecies of *Ochotona pusilla* Pallas, 1769. Hoffmann (1993) treated it as a distinct species following Smith *et al.* (1990). The taxon *Lagomys hodgsoni* Blyth, 1841, that had been treated as a synonym of *Ochotona roylei* (Ogilby, 1839) by Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951) has been presently synonymized with *Ochotona nubrica* Thomas, 1922 following Hoffmann (1993).**12. *Ochotona roylei* (Ogilby, 1839)**1839. *Lagomys roylei* Ogilby, Royle's Illus., Botany Himalaya, lxi.Name: Royle's PikaType locality: Choor Mtns., Punjab, IndiaSynonyms: *Lagomys roylei* Ogilby, 1839*Lagomys nepalensis* Hodgson, 1841*Ochotona wardi* Bonhote, 1904*Ochotona angdawai* Biswas & Khajuria, 1955*Ochotona mitchelli* Agrawal & Chakraborty, 1971Subspecies: *Ochotona roylei roylei* (Ogilby, 1839)*Ochotona roylei wardi* Bonhote, 1904Distribution: Jammu & Kashmir, Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir,

Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal in India; Pakistan; Nepal.

Comments: Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951) treated the taxon *Lagomys hodgsoni* Blyth, 1841 as a subspecies of *Ochotona roylei* (Ogilby, 1839). However, the aforementioned taxon was assigned to *Ochotona nubrica* Thomas 1922 by Hoffmann (1993). The taxon *Ochotona roylei baltina* Thomas, 1922 listed earlier under this taxon had been synonymized with *Ochotona macrotis* (Günther, 1875) (see comments therein) by Hoffmann (1993).**13. *Ochotona rufescens* (Gray, 1842)**1842. *Lagomys rufescens* Gray, Ann. Mag. nat. Hist., (1)10: 266.Name: Afghan PikaType locality: Near Babur's tomb, Kabul, AfghanistanSynonyms: *Lagomys rufescens* Gray, 1842*Ochotona rufescens vutruna* Thomas, 1920Subspecies: *Ochotona rufescens rufescens* (Gray, 1842)Distribution: Baluchistan in Pakistan.Comments: Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951) included *Ochotona rufescens vutruna* Thomas, 1920 that was reported from Kelat, Baluchistan which they remarked to be either an aberrant form or may not belong to *Ochotona rufescens* (Gray, 1842). Hoffmann (1993) synonymized *Ochotona rufescens vutruna* Thomas, 1920 with *Ochotona rufescens* (Gray, 1842).**14. *Ochotona tibetana* (Milne-Edwards, 1871)**1871. *Lagomys tibetanus* Milne-Edwards in David, Nouv. Arch. Mus. Hist. Nat. Paris Bull. 7: 93.Name: Manipur PikaType locality: Moupin, Sichuan, ChinaSynonyms: *Lagomys tibetanus* Milne-Edwards, 1871*Ochotona tibetana* deWinton & Styan, 1899*Ochotona hodgsoni* Bonhote, 1905*Ochotona sikimaria* Thomas, 1922Subspecies: *Ochotona tibetana sikimaria* Thomas, 1922Distribution: Sikkim in India; Bhutan.Comments: Hoffmann (1993) remarks that this taxon had been formerly included by various authors in either *Ochotona forresti* Thomas, 1923 or *Ochotona nubrica* Thomas, 1922. The isolated taxon, named *Ochotona sikimaria* Thomas, 1922, earlier assigned to *Ochotona cansus* Lyon, 1707 by Feng and Kao (1974) but transferred to *Ochotona tibetana* (Milne-Edwards, 1871) by Smith *et al.* (1990) concerns us.**Acknowledgements**

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