

Rarely seen herbivore clicked in N Bengal forest

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Kolkata: In a first, a near-threatened herbivore — the Himalayan serow — has been photographed in North Bengal's Buxa Tiger Reserve (BTR). This is the first photographic evidence of the animal in Buxa.

A clouded leopard, too, has been clicked in the tiger reserve — the fifth photo evidence of the animal from the North Bengal park and the second in a span of only six months. In August 2014, camera traps placed in the upper terrain of the tiger reserve, had clicked an image of a clouded leopard.

This time, the photos were clicked by camera traps placed by city-based NGO, Nature Environment and Wildlife Society (NEWS), in collaboration with the BTR authorities.

Former Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) senior scientist, Sujit Chakraborty, confirmed that the herbivore clicked in the forest is a serow. "But it's difficult to identify from a photograph which subspecies is this. But, it's likely to be a Himalayan serow," he added.

Project director and joint secretary of NEWS, Ajanta Dey, said the animals were found near the Phashkhawa beat under the upper reaches of Jayanti range. "Villagers' pressure on the tiger reserve is known to all. But, these images show that some pockets on the upper terrain of the forest are still virgin. If protected properly, we can get more glimpses of the rich faunal diversity of Buxa," she said, adding that the serow was captured twice in camera traps, both in the daylight and night.

Biswapriya Rahut, secretary of Society for

Buxa Tiger Reserve & NEWS



This is the animal's first photo evidence in Buxa

Preservation and Awareness of Wildlife and Nature (SPAWN), Jalpaiguri, said this is the first photo evidence of the ungulate in Buxa. "The animal has two altitudinal ranges in North Bengal — high and low. While the high altitudinal range of the serows here is spread across Neora Valley and Singalila, the upper reaches of Buxa form the lower altitudinal range of the animals," he said.

Former deputy field director of Buxa, Subhankar Sengupta, said: "In 2008-09, a serow was rescued from the Phashkhawa beat and later released in the forest. But, this is the first photo evidence of the animal in the wild." Buxa Tiger Reserve field director Sundip Sundriyal said the images once again bring to light the faunal diversity of the tiger reserve.

The Himalayan serow is a goat-antelope native to the Himalayas, and eastern and southeastern Bangladesh. It has been classified as 'Near Threatened' by IUCN because it is believed to be in significant decline due to hunting for food and habitat loss.