

# New distribution records for *Poecilogale albinucha* and *Rhynchogale melleri* in southern Africa

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The Striped weasel (*Poecilogale albinucha*) has a fairly broad distribution to the south of the Equator. In southern Africa it is restricted to the east, except for a narrow belt across north of South Africa and extending marginally into Namibia. Although most records of occurrence are from various grassland associations, they do occur in lowland rainforest in the southern Congo River basin. On the 6th of January 1997 a car-killed *Poecilogale* was collected and photographed (Jaco van Deventer who supplied the details and voucher photographs) in the extreme south-west of Western Province, South Africa. Locality details: 3319AC (33°17'10"S, 19°10'E), close to Boontjie's River, between Watervalsberg in the west and the Witsenberg range in the east, on the farm 'Artoes'.

This constitutes a westerly range extension of more than 250 km and it is the first time that this tiny mustelid has been recorded in Cape Macchia (Fynbos) vegetation type. The road runs through a mix of arable fields and short grassland circled by fynbos covered hills.

In 1989 the authors discovered the presence of the striped weasel in the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, a further range extension (Stuart & Stuart, 1990). We also have an unconfirmed, but fairly secure sighting, of this mustelid from the central Great Karoo (3123AC), which is a mix of short scrub mixed with grass. The fact that it is now recorded from grassland types, lowland rainforest, semi-desert, and Cape Macchia indicates that it has a much broader habitat tolerance than previously thought.

Meller's mongoose (*Rhynchogale melleri*) has a seemingly patchy, disjunct, distribution but it has always been our feeling that this is more an indication of scarcity and under-recording than actual true distribution pattern. The patchy distribution is certainly not due to habitat restriction as its known range and areas in between is covered with its favoured habitat of open woodlands adjacent to savannah. Dense cover and proximity to water are important requirements.

A road casualty was photographed (Penny Meakin & John Carlyon) about 5 km south of Kariba Village (in the direction of Makouti and Karoi; 16°42'S, 29°15'E) in northern Zimbabwe in early 1996 (exact date unknown). These photographs are lodged at the AAWRC office and are clearly of this species. The area is predominantly covered by *Brachystegia* woodland and is close to Lake Kariba and the Zambezi River. This record forms the "missing link" between Zimbabwe Midlands records and that of the miombo woodlands of Zambia that lies on the north bank of the Zambezi River.

## Reference

Stuart, C. T & Stuart, M. D. 1990. Striped weasel, *Poecilogale albinucha*, recorded from the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park. *Koedoe* 33(1):112-113.

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## Sumatran Small Carnivore Project

### Background

Sumatra was highlighted as a core area for mustelid and viverrid conservation in 1989 by Schreiber *et al.* To date, however, no detailed study has been undertaken on the small carnivore community of Sumatra. To address this imbalance a two year field project endorsed by the IUCN/SSC Mustelid, Viverrid and Procyonid Specialist Group is being planned. The project is to take place in the Kerinci Seblat National Park which, being Sumatra's largest remaining continuous area of rain forest, extends 345 km along the volcanic Barisan mountain chain. With an altitude range of 35 to 3,805 m ASL the National Park could harbour target species for conservation (Schreiber *et al.*) such as the Otter civet (*Cynogale bennettii*), Sumatran collared mongoose (*Herpestes semitorquatus uniformis*) and the Indonesian mountain weasel (*Mustela lutreolina*). All species of viverrid, mustelid and herpestid will be studied including species such as the Banded linsang (*Prionodon linsang*), Banded palm civet (*Hemigalus derbyanus*), Binturong (*Arctictis binturong*), Hog-nosed badger (*Arctonyx collaris*), Malay badger (*Myolais javanensis*), Oriental small-clawed otter (*Aonyx cinerea*) and Smooth-coated otter (*Lutra perspicillata*).

### Aims

- Calculation of home range size and use.
- Population size and variation with altitude and habitat type.
- Estimation of population densities and distributions.
- Determination of diet and prey selection.
- Calculation of prey density and biomass.
- Inter-specific comparison to evaluate mode of niche partitioning between small carnivore species.
- Investigate the effects of habitat type and fruiting cycles on populations.
- Production of recommendations for future conservation efforts on the small carnivore community of Sumatra.

### Methods

Diurnal and nocturnal transects to establish carnivore and prey densities.  
Remote camera-trapping to establish presence and distribution of species.  
Radio-tracking to determine home range size and use.  
Faecal analysis to investigate the diet of each carnivore species.  
Small mammal trapping to calculate rodent densities and so prey biomass.  
Vegetation surveys to establish habitat type and fruit availability.

### Logistics

All work is to be carried out in close collaboration with the Directorate General for Forest Protection and Nature Conservation (PHPA) and the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI). Indonesian students will be heavily involved in the project and local guides will be employed. The project manager will be Dr. D. J. Chivers of the University of Cambridge Wildlife Research Group.

### Funding

Some funding has been obtained from the Zoological Society For The Conservation of Species and Populations, but more is required before the project can commence. Anyone interested in receiving more details of the project or able to help with information, advice or financial assistance I would be grateful to hear from.

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