



Short Communication

First Photographic Evidence of Yellow-Throated Marten (*Martes flavigula*) from Nowshera District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Meso-predators are often greatly interlinked within their food webs. They are often omnivorous, consuming a broader array of prey items than do larger predators. Meso-carnivores can play the role of apex predator by inhibiting competitors and controlling prey populations especially in systems where large-bodied primary consumers are limited. This note presents the first photographic evidence of yellow-throated marten from Nizampur National Park (NNP), Nowshera district Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Pakistan. The presence of this species indicated that this ecosystem has rich biodiversity, providing plenty of resources for the survival of yellow-throated marten. However, keeping in view the diet ecology of yellow-throated marten we assume that it may have some negative impacts on the ongoing ungulates captive breeding programs with in the park. Therefore, detailed studies are needed to be carried out to investigate the population trend and habitat ranges of this species in the park and adjacent areas.

The Yellow-throated Marten (*Martes flavigula*), globally listed as least concerned with decreasing population trend in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, has a wide range in tropical, sub-tropical and temperate South, South-east and East Asia (Corbet and Hill, 1992; Chutipong *et al.*, 2016). In Pakistan this species has been listed as data deficient (Sheikh and Molur, 2005), and reported mainly from northern parts of the country (Ahmad *et al.*, 2016). Yellow-throated marten is an omnivorous and its wide-ranging diet menu includes fruits, insects, birds, reptiles, amphibians, mammals, and eggs (Grassman *et al.*, 2005; Parr and Duckworth, 2007; Zhou *et al.*, 2011). Being a fearless species the yellow-throated marten occasionally

also takes on ungulates such as musk deer (*Moschus moschiferus*), fawns of spotted deer (*Axis axis*), roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), goral (*Naemorhedus goral*), wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) piglets and panda cubs (*Ailuropoda melanoleuca*). At ecological niche levels being a top-level predator yellow-throated marten has enormous effect on prey populations, especially of the small mammals and medium sized ungulates, thus controlling and contributing to the formation of the forest communities. As these martens eat fruits as well, they may also disperse seeds throughout the forest they inhabit (<https://animalia.bio/yellow-throated-marten>). In a nut shell martens are considered as ecosystem's health indicators.

Field observations

During our field visits (July, 2022) for collecting data on wild boar presence in Nizampur National Park (NNP) (33°45'19" N; 72°0'15" E) Nowshera district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Province, we opportunistically encountered the yellow-throated marten chasing Indian hare (*Lepus nigricollis*) (Fig. 1) alongside the cages of captive breeding ungulates. The study area has a prevailing local steppe or semiarid climate. The average annual

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RHK and AH collected data. RHK wrote the manuscript. NUK and AA assisted in field work. ZL and LT supervised and assisted in write-up and review before submission.

Key words

Martes flavigula, Nizampur National Park, Nowshera, Photographic evidence

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temperature recorded is 24.4°C with an average rainfall of 532 mm. January is the coldest month with average monthly temperatures lower than 10°C while the warmest month is June with average monthly temperature up to 33.6 °C. The habitat in this park is broad-leaved evergreen scrub forests. The dominant species are *Olea ferruginea* (Olive, Zaithoon), *Acacia modesta* (Phulai), *Vachellia nilotica* (Kikar), *Zizyphus mauratiana* (Ber), *Monothecha buxifolia* (Gurgurah) and *Dodonaea viscosa* (Sanatha, Ghwarahsky).

Although this area falls within the IUCN declared range for yellow-throated marten, yet till date no detailed evidence was reported from this part of KP and the adjacent areas. According to Roberts (1997) the yellow-throated marten exists only along the pines belt in KP province.



Fig. 1. Yellow-throated marten sighted and photographed in NNP, Nowshera KP Pakistan (Photo credit: Abdul Hadi).

Observation importance

In Pakistan yellow-throated marten has been mainly reported from the northern parts (Roberts, 1997; Ahmad *et al.*, 2016). We believe that this field note is of great importance in terms of conservation. The presence of yellow-throated marten in these areas indicates that these habitats have rich biodiversity providing plenty of resources in terms of prey species, fruits and seeds. However, simultaneously keeping in view the feeding strategies of yellow-throated marten we believe that it may have the potential to compromise the population of captive breeding ungulates in the area including urial (*Ovis vignei*), hog deer (*Axis porcinus*), black buck (*Antelope cervicapra*), Indian gazelle (*Gazella bennettii*) and spotted deer (*Axis axis*) by hunting their fawns (Zhou *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, based on the evidence reported in

the current note we strongly recommend carrying out in depth surveys to assess the population status and habitat ranges of yellow-throated marten in the aforementioned and adjacent areas.

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Statement of conflict of interest

The authors have declared no conflict of interest.

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