

A SIGHT RECORD OF RHESUS MACAQUE *MACACA MULATTA* (PRIMATES: CERCOPITHECIDAE) IN KARNATAKA, INDIA

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India is home to eight species of macaques (Pragatheesh 2011) with Rhesus Macaque *Macaca mulatta* and Bonnet Macaque *Macaca radiata* being the most common. Rhesus Macaques are the most widely distributed macaques in India (Fooden 2000). Its status is assessed as 'Least Concern' by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Timmins et al. 2008) due to its wide distribution.

Within India, the Bonnet Macaque is predominantly found in southern India (Kumar et al. 2011) while the Rhesus Macaque is found in northern, central and northeastern India as well as Central and Southeast Asia (Kumar et al. 2011). Initial studies revealed the southern limits of the distribution of the Rhesus Macaque to be the Godavari River with some records of the species from Hyderabad, 160km south of the river Godavari (Fooden 2000). More recent studies show the southern limits of the distribution boundary to reach the south of river Krishna and north of the Eastern Ghats (Kumar et al. 2011). However, there is no recorded documentation of the Rhesus Macaque being found in the State of Karnataka (Fooden et al. 1981; Kumara et al. 2010; Kumar et al. 2011; Srivastava 2013).

On 02 July 2013, during a field visit to Chincholi Wildlife Sanctuary, Gulbarga District, Karnataka, we were

travelling on state highway 149 that traverses through the Sanctuary. This is the road from Chandapur to Shadipur. It was around 15:50hr and we had just passed a board with directions to the Mandi Basavanna camp (approximately 17.449823N & 77.518124E, Fig. 1).

We sighted a group of Rhesus Macaques on the main road (Images 1–3). The group was very shy and left the road as we approached it. We were able to photograph two individuals. We could count seven adults and two infants. We waited at the same spot for some time (approximately 20 minutes). However, the macaques did not come out into the open. On our return journey one hour later, we came back to the same spot at around 17:20hr and saw a Rhesus Macaque group on the road. As we approached them, they walked away into the undergrowth. We then walked up to the Mandi Basavanna camp which was approximately 500m from the main road. We spotted two Rhesus Macaques near the camp site.

Chincholi Wildlife Sanctuary has been notified recently as Karnataka's 21st Wildlife Sanctuary. The sanctuary comprises predominantly dry deciduous forests.

The current sighting indicates the presence of Rhesus Macaques in Karnataka that was previously not found (Kumara et al. 2010; Kumar et al. 2011). There have been reports of Rhesus Macaques in the neighboring states of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. The closest recorded sightings of the Rhesus Macaques are from just 100km away in Hyderabad, Medak and Mahbubnagar (Kumar et al. 2011; Srivastava 2013) in Andhra Pradesh. Their presence at Chincholi Wildlife Sanctuary could be



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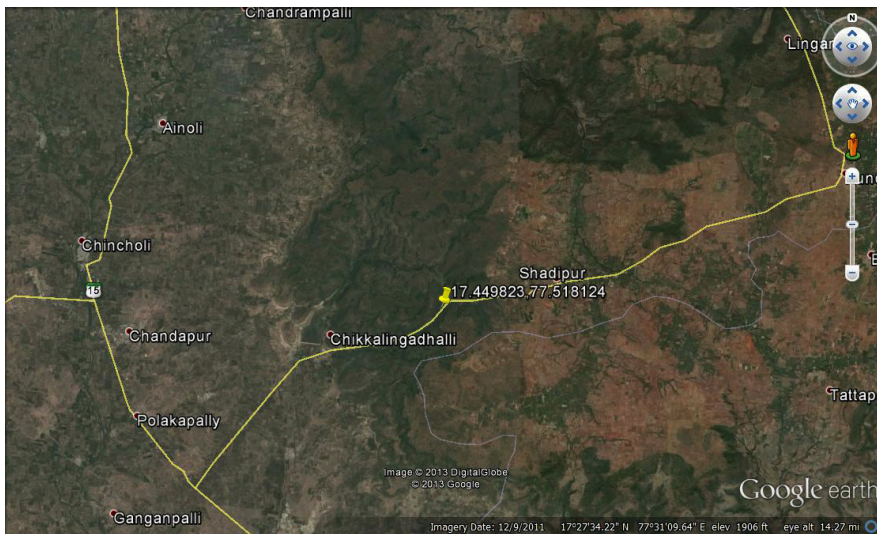


Figure 1. The sighting location (yellow pin mark) of the Rhesus Macaque at Chincholi Wildlife Sanctuary, Gulbarga District, Karnataka.



Image 1. Rhesus Macaque crossing the road as we approached the group.



Image 2. Rhesus Macaque crossing the road as we approached the group



Image 3. Rhesus Macaque on a tree at Chincholi Wildlife Sanctuary, Karnataka

due to a natural extension of the geographical boundary for the Rhesus Macaques (Fooden et al. 1981), or the population could have been introduced artificially in

these or nearby areas (Koyama & Shekar 1981; Kumar et al. 2011).

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