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NOTE

FIRST PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF THE ASIATIC BRUSH-TAILED PORCUPINE *ATHERURUS MACROURUS* (LINNAEUS, 1758) (MAMMALIA: RODENTIA: HYSTRICIDAE) FROM THE BARAK VALLEY REGION OF ASSAM, INDIA

Rejoice Gassah & Vijay Anand Ismavel

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First photographic record of the Asiatic Brush-tailed Porcupine *Atherurus macrourus* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Mammalia: Rodentia: Hystricidae) from the Barak Valley region of Assam, India

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An Asiatic Brush-tailed Porcupine *Atherurus macrourus* (Linnaeus, 1758) was photographed on the 25 February 2019 at 23.49h in semi-evergreen forest, close to Dosedewa Village in Karimganj District of Assam (92.405°N & 24.358°E) using a camera trap during biodiversity documentation activities. This is the first photographic record of this species from the Barak Valley region of Assam (Image 1–3). The Asiatic Brush-tailed Porcupine is a species of rodent in the Hystricidae family and is the smallest and rarest of the three species of porcupines found in southern Asia (Molur 2020). In India, this species occurs only in northeastern India and has been reported from Namdapha National Park of Arunachal Pradesh, Garampani Wildlife Sanctuary of Assam, Intanki National Park in Nagaland, Ngengpui Wildlife Sanctuary of Mizoram, and Khasi Hills of Meghalaya (Talukdar et al. 2019); there are also records from the other states (Choudhury 2013). In 2014, the species was observed from the Gedu Territorial Forest Division of western Bhutan (Dhendup & Dorji 2017). Worldwide, it has also been reported from southern China, northern Myanmar, northern Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Malay peninsula, and adjacent islands (Molur 2020).

The species is distinguished by absence of crest, back covered with rigid spines and tail bearing scales with short spiny bristles in-between and ending in a cluster of alternately expanded and contracted papery hairs 8–10cm long giving a characteristic brush-like appearance which was clearly captured in the photographs (Agarwal 2000). Being a shy, nocturnal, and fossorial animal, it is very difficult to get diagnostic



Image 1. Asiatic Brush-tailed Porcupine *Atherurus macrourus*

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Image 2 & 3. Asiatic Brush-tailed Porcupine *Atherurus macrourus*

images of this species, except through camera trapping. Porcupines are seen as a pest by farmers and are also trapped and consumed as meat. Although this species is classified as Least Concern (LC) in the IUCN Red List it is protected in India under Schedule II – Part I of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act. The presence of this species in the Barak Valley of Assam is significant as it indicates that good mammalian diversity occurs in this region, inspite of rapid degradation of the forests.

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