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A first photogenic record of smooth-coated otter (L. *perspicillata*) in Dabhoi (Vadodara), North Gujarat

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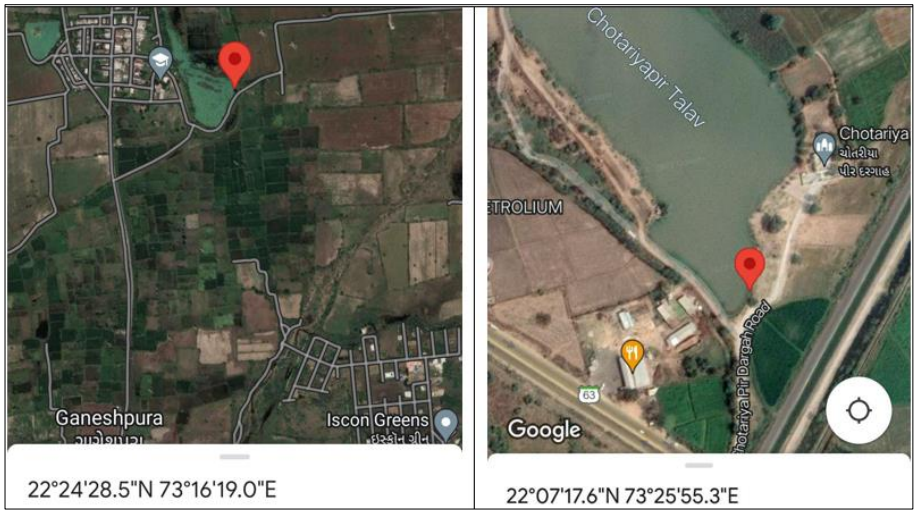
Abstract
The presence of the smooth-coated otter (*L. perspicillata*) in the Dabhoi (Vadodara) North Gujarat has been confirmed by direct sighting and Camera trapping. A family of smooth-coated otters was observed in a stream, hunting and eating fish from fishermen's nets, resting and swimming around during the end of morning low tide. This is the first study that confirms the presence of otters here. The next closest known record is from Surat district which is about 80 km south of the Study area. The report suggests the available rich biodiversity of the river and agricultural field which should come under conservation criteria.

Keywords: Smooth-coated otters, Dabhoi village, fresh water, agricultural land

Introduction
The smooth-coated otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*) is social, nocturnal, piscivorous mustelid occurring throughout South and Southeast Asia, and Iraq (Blantord 1890; Hussain and Choudhury Iyy/: Medway Iyoy). Un the Indian pen Insula, this species is primarily found in plains, deserts aria areas, and the highlands of the Deccan. In habiting 2 Springe Mammal Respir canals, and irrigation tanks, using Hooded held, estuaries, coastal belts, and the open sea as hunting grounds (Prater 2005) [9]. Fish, crabs, shrimp, insects, and amphibians constitute its diet (Anoop and Hussam 2005: osterurev 1992).The species is classified "Vulnerable' on the IUCN Red List of threatened Species and listed under Schedule-Il of the Indian Wild Protection Act. IV 2 (Debilva *et al*. 2015). Wildlife Protection Act 1972). In Gujarat, *L. perspicillata* genera v occurs. In large rivers characterised or brackish water and mangrove forest patches (Borker *et al*. 2016) [10].

Occurrence of Smooth-coated otters could be an indicator of abundance of prey, but they also known to adapt to the changes in land use patterns and anthropogenic led changes in habitat.

Three species of otter have been reported in India (Smooth-coated otter, Eurasian otter and Small-clawed otter) (Reuther, 1999) [7]. Among these, smooth-coated otters have been reported nationwide while other two species are restricted to some specific locations and they are not reported in central and south India (Hussain and Choudhary, 1995; Forster-Turley and Santiapalli, 1990) [2, 1]. The distribution of suitable habitat for smooth-coated otters is quite high but these areas are also near shore or in estuaries that are prone to unmanaged development and infrastructure growth, making this species IUCN Otter Spec. Group Bull. 39 (1) 2022 exposed to a range of threats. Smooth-coated otters remain one of the least studied species in Asia and are classified as insufficiently studied by the IUCN Red list and are in schedule II in the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. The lack of knowledge of smooth-coated otters throughout their range, limits the conservation strategy required to conserve the species (Hussain and Choudhary, 1995) [2]. Habitat selection studies on L. perspicillata In India have largely been carried out in protected areas. Perivar Tiger Reserve, Kerala. South India. Hussain (2014) [3] studied habitat selection of this species with the help of an ordination technique using parameters such as defecating areas, holts, tootprints, and grooming Siles as indicators for presence. The study concluded that several environmental factors such as shallow water deins. In number or distribution of potential holt sites, sandy substratum, vegetation cover, grooming sites, and latrine sites influenced habitat selection. (Similarly Khan *et al*. 2014) [11]. Studied habitat use pattern of smooth-coated otters in the upper Gangetic basin. This study indicated the preference for sandy substrates in some reloans of the study area and muddy substrates as well as weal and farms.



GPS Location plotted Map of study area

Smooth-coated otter (*L. perspicillata*) Image

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