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### NOTE

#### NEW DISTRIBUTION RECORD OF THE BHUTAN TAKIN *BUDORCAS TAXICOLOR WHITEI* HODGSON, 1850 (CETARTIODACTYLA: BOVIDAE) IN BHUTAN

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## NEW DISTRIBUTION RECORD OF THE BHUTAN TAKIN *BUDORCAS TAXICOLOR WHITEI* HODGSON, 1850 (CETARTIODACTYLA: BOVIDAE) IN BHUTAN

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For the first time, a Bhutan Takin *Budorcas taxicolor whitei* was camera trapped in the eastern part of Wangchuck Centennial National Park (27°56'03.8"E & 91°04'53.7"N) and is by thus far, the easternmost documented evidence of Takin presence in Bhutan. A lone individual was photographed at 3,898m in the upper mixed fir and rhododendron forest of Thomthom area in northeastern part of Lhuentse District, which also forms a part of the upper watersheds of Kurichu River (Image 1). The animal was found at about a few hundred metres away from a trail which is extensively used by the Bhutanese army for border patrols and also by forest officials for anti-poaching patrols. Other species which were recorded at the site included the Himalayan Black Bear *Ursus thibetanus*, Asiatic Golden Cat *Catopuma temminckii* and Blood Pheasant *Ithaginis cruentus*. Old signs of poaching such as remnants of traps made out of rhododendron branches were also observed in the nearby ridges. The camera trapping exercise spanned the uplands of Wangchuck Centennial

National Park, Phrumsengla National Park, Singye Dzong area in Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary and districts of Bumthang, Monger, Trashigang and Gasa. Ninety-nine camera trap stations were set up and the total sampling effort realized was 2,079 trap days.

In Bhutan, the species is believed to occur in scattered populations throughout forested and unforested mountain slopes on Bhutan's northern border (Song et al. 2009). Previously, the species was documented up to Dhur in Wangchuck Centennial National Park and then later in 2011 at Rodungla (27°34'56.4"E & 90°58'59.4"N) in Phrumsengla National Park (Wangchuk 2011). Another interesting finding from the camera trap exercise is photographs of Bhutan Takin at elevations of 4,864m in Gomthang under Wangchuck Centennial National Park (Image 2). Previously, Bhutan Takin was not known above 4,200m (Sharma et al. 2015). This suggests that in their search for food and seasonal migration across landscapes, they traverse routes much above the tree line into the snowline. However, this assumption will need to be validated through carefully designed studies. Also, to protect the species and its seasonal habits, these highlands should receive priority conservation attention.

Classified as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List category, the species is believed to be threatened by overhunting and habitat loss across its distribution range and its population is believed to be declining globally. In Bhutan, it confronts threats from



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**Image 1.** Takin camera trapped in the eastern part of Wangchuck Centennial National Park, the eastern most distribution in Bhutan



**Image 2.** Takin camera trapped at 4,864m in Gomthang under Wangchuck Centennial National Park, Bhutan

competition and disease transmission from domestic livestock, habitat loss and loss or disruption of migration routes (Song et al. 2009). The species lacks a proper population status and clear migration routes within the country. It is listed in Schedule I species of Forest and Nature Conservation Act of 1995 and has also been declared as the national animal of Bhutan.

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