

# FAUNAL DIVERSITY IN INDIA

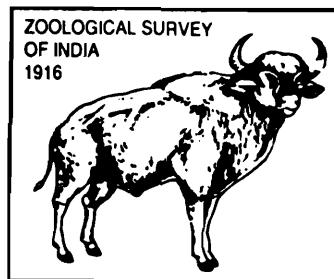
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# Faunal Diversity in India : Mammalia

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## MAMMALIA

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most fascinating features of the Indian biodiversity is its mammalian fauna, which encompasses species as large as whales, elephants, rhinoceroses and tigers, and as small as shrews, mice and bats. They are found in all types of habitats of the country, both terrestrial and aquatic. They may be volant, arboreal, ground dwelling, fossorial or aquatic in habits. Each species has its own unique set of characteristics enabling it to survive in its particular environment.

The term 'mammals' refers to animals possessing mammary or milk producing glands for nourishing their young ones. Another important feature of the group is the possessing of hairs on the body at least during some period of their life cycle.

### STATUS OF THE TAXON

#### Global and Indian Status

The mammalian fauna of the world is represented by 4629 species belonging to 1135 genera, 136 families and 26 orders (Wilson and Reeder, 1993). Of these, 390 species belonging to 180 genera, 42 families and 13 orders are found in the Indian Union. Another 13 orders do not occur in our country. The egg-laying mammals belonging to the order Monotremata are found only in Australia, Tasmania and new Guinea; 7 orders of Marsupials in Australia, Indonesia and South America, orders Hyracoidea, Tubilidentata and Macroscelidea in Africa; order Xenarthra in South America; and order Dermoptera in Java, Sumatra and the Philippines.

### DISTRIBUTION

Mammals are found in all types of habitats, from snowy heights of the Himalayas to the plains, from thick rain forests to the arid region, and from

terrestrial to aquatic realm. The Indian aquatic mammals mainly belong to orders Cetacea and Sirenia. All the cetaceans found in India except the Gangetic Dolphin, *Platanista gangetica*, which is a freshwater form, are marine. The chiropterans (bats) are fliers. Of all the ecosystems in India, the mammalian fauna is richest in the northeastern India, followed by Western Ghats, Eastern Ghats, and the Desert. The Indian fauna is heavily influenced by the Indo-Chinese, Malayan, Ethiopian and Palaearctic elements.

The past distribution of mammals, in India, is not strikingly different from the present one, except that a few species like the Hunting Leopard (*Acinonyx jubatus veneticus*) and the lesser one-horned Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) have become extinct, and about 50% of the species have shrunk in their distributional range due mainly to destruction of habitat, and their exploitation for various purposes.

### BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND ITS SPECIAL FEATURES

An order-wise break up of families, genera and species found in India (*vide* Wilson and Reeder 1993) as against the total number found throughout the world is given below. However, the orders not represented in India but found elsewhere have not been mentioned here.

Table – 1

Orders	Families		Genera		Species	
	India	World	India	World	India	World
Insectivora	3	7	11	66	28	428
Scandentia	1	1	2	5	3	19
Chiroptera	6	17	36	177	110	925
Primates	3	13	6	60	15	233
Pholidota	1	1	1	1	2	7
Carnivora	7	11	33	129	55	271
Proboscidea	1	1	1	2	1	2
Sirenia	1	2	1	3	1	5
Perissodactyla	2	3	2	6	3	18
Artiodactyla	5	10	20	81	32	220
Lagomorpha	2	2	3	13	10	80
Rodentia	4	29	43	443	101	2021
Cetacea	6	10	21	41	29	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>1027</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>4307</b>

### Introduced species

The House mouse (*Mus musculus*) and the Norway rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) have reached India through human agencies and established here. In addition, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are the only areas where some species of mammals are said to have been introduced in the past from the mainland by human beings (Tikader & Das 1985). These species are the Crab-eating Macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*), Pig-tailed Macaque (*Macaca nemestrina leonina*), Jungle Cat (*Felis chaus*), Chital (*Axis axis*), Barking Deer (*Muntiacus muntjak*), Sambar (*Cervus unicolor*) Palm Civet (*Paguma larvata*), Wild pig (*Sus scrofa*), Elephant (*Elephas maximus*), Northern Palm Squirrel (*Funambulus pennanti*), rats and mice. Of these, the Crab-eating Macaque, Chital, Palm Civet and Wild Boar and various species of rats have established themselves well, so much so that, of late, chital became a pest of crops. However, rest of the species, could not adequately adapt themselves, and hence, in the course of time either disappeared or are present in negligible number. Some of the captive elephants escaped into the jungle and formed small herds of their own and started roaming in the wild.

### Domestic species

The pariah dog (*Canis familiaris*), domestic cat (*Felis catus*), ass (*Equus asinus* and *E. cabalus*), pig (*Sus domesticus*), camel (*Camelus dromedarius*), cow (*Bos frontalis*), buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*), sheep (*ovis aries*), goat (*capra hircus*), yak (*Bos grunniens*) and mithun are domesticated species which occur in India.

### Human-Mammal Relationship

The knowledge about the Indian mammals is very old. Descriptions of some mammals are available in the Vedas and even in the prevedic edicts. There are ethical, social, mythological and economic relationship between man and wild mammals. Authorities of Ayurvedic and Unnani medicines were aware of medicinal values of some products obtained from certain species of mammals. Some species of monkeys like the Rhesus macaques and the Norway rats are used in experiments of biomedical research. A number of species of rodents are reservoirs of many of the dreadful diseases of man and livestock.

Some species of mammals such as rats, hanuman langur, gaur (bull), elephant, tiger, lion, etc., have special mythological significance amongst Hindus. This is due to their being associated with different gods and goddesses in the Hindu mythology, and, hence, are worshipped.

**Table – 2**  
**Monotypic genera and their species found in India**

Order	Species
<b>Insectivora</b>	<i>Anourosorex sqamipes, Nectogale elegans, Parascaptor leucura and Feroculus feroculus</i>
<b>Scandentia</b>	<i>Anathana ellioti</i>
<b>Chiroptera</b>	<i>Otonycteris hemprichi, Sphaerias blanfordi, Latidens salimalii and Scotozous dormieri</i>
<b>Primates</b>	<i>Loris tardigradus</i>
<b>Carnivora</b>	<i>Helarctos malayanus, Cuon alpinus, Melursus ursinus, Aliurus fulgens, Arctonyx collaris, Mellivora capensis, Arctogalidea trivirgata, Paguma larvata, Arctictis binturong, Neofelis nebulosa, Acinonyx jubatus, Lutrogale perspicillata, Hyaena hyaena, Pardofelis marmorata, Viverricula indica, Caracal caracal, Otocolobus manul and Lynx lynx.</i>
<b>Proboscidea</b>	<i>Elephas maximus</i>
<b>Sirenia</b>	<i>Dugong dugon</i>
<b>Artiodactyla</b>	<i>Boselaphus tragocamelus, Tetracerus quadricornis, Antilope cervicapra, Budorcas taxicolor and Pantholops hodgsonii</i>
<b>Rodentia</b>	<i>Biswamoyopterus biswasi, Eupetaurus cinereus, Platacanthomys lasiurus, Cannomys badius, Hadromys humei, Golunda ellioti, Dacnomys millardi, Diomys crumpi, Nesokia indica and Micromys minutus</i>
<b>Lagomorpha</b>	<i>Caprolagus hispidus</i>
<b>Cetacea</b>	<i>Tursiops truncatus, Steno bredanensis, Peponocephala electra, Delphinus delphis, Granipus griseus, Lagenodelphis hosei, Orcinus orca, Globicephala macrorhynchus, Ziphius cavirostris, Orcaella brevirostris, Psudorca crassidens, Feresa attenuata, Neophocaena phocaenoides, Physeter macrocephalus and Megaptera novaeangliae</i>

### ENDEMICITY

Out of 180 genera of Indian mammals, 61 genera are monotypic (Table 2) and 105 are represented in India by a single species. Of these, 10 genera namely, *Scotozous* (Chiroptera), *Loris* (Primates), *Melursus* (Carnivora), *Antilope*,

*Boselaphus*, *Tetracerus* and *Pantholops* (Artiodactyla), *Eupetaurus* and *Golunda* (Rodentia) and *Caprolagus* (Lagomorpha) are endemic to Indian subregion, and another 4 genera, namely, *Anathana* (Scandentia), *Latidens* (Chiroptera) and *Biswamoyopterus*, and *Platacanthomys* (Rodentia) are endemic to the Indian Union. At specific level, 36 species (Insectivora—4, Scandentia—2, Chiroptera—9, Primates—3, Carnivora—4, Artiodactyla—1, Rodentia—13) are endemic, of which 9 species are localised to Andaman and Nicobar groups of islands, 14 species to Western Ghats, 7 species to peninsular India, 4 species to northeastern India and the rest two to Western Himalaya (Table – 3).

Table – 3

#### List of mammalian species endemic to the Indian Union

Order	Species
<b>Andaman &amp; Nicobar Islands</b>	
Insectivora :	<i>Crocidura jenkinsi</i> , <i>Crocidura andamanensis</i> , <i>Crocidura hispida</i> and <i>Crocidura nicobarica</i>
Chiroptera :	<i>Pteropus faunulus</i> and <i>Rhinolophus cognatus</i>
Rodentia :	<i>Rattus stoicus</i> and <i>Rattus palmarum</i>
Scandentia :	<i>Tupaia nicobarica</i>
<b>Western Ghats</b>	
Chiroptera :	<i>Latidens salimalii</i> , <i>Otomops wroughtoni</i> and <i>Hipposideros hypophyllus</i>
Primates :	<i>Macaca silenus</i> and <i>Trachypithecus johnii</i>
Carnivora :	<i>Paradoxurus jerdoni</i> and <i>Viverra civettina</i>
Artiodactyla :	<i>Hemitragus hylocrius</i>
Rodentia :	<i>Funambulus tristriatus</i> , <i>Platacanthomys lasiurus</i> , <i>Millardia kondana</i> , <i>Rattus ranjiniae</i> , <i>Mus famulus</i> and <i>Cremnomys elvira</i>

### Peninsular India

<b>Scandentia :</b>	<i>Anathana ellioti</i>
<b>Primates :</b>	<i>Macaca radiata</i>
<b>Chiroptera</b>	<i>Hipposideros schistaceus</i>
<b>Carnivora</b>	<i>Martes gwatkinsii</i>
<b>Rodentia</b>	<i>Ratufa indica, Cremonomys cutchicus and Mus phillipsi</i>

### Western Himalaya

<b>Chiroptera :</b>	<i>Murina grisea</i>
<b>Rodentia</b>	<i>Alticola montosa</i>

### Northeastern India

<b>Chiroptera :</b>	<i>Eptesicus tatei and Rhinolophus mitratus</i>
<b>Carnivora :</b>	<i>Herpestes palustris</i>
<b>Rodentia :</b>	<i>Biswamoyopterus biswasi</i>

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### THREATENED SPECIES

Of a total of 390 species of mammals reported from India, 175 species are threatened with extinction. But the degree of threat varies, and on that basis 75 species have been listed in Schedule I, 73 in Schedule II, 8 in Schedule III and 19 in Schedule IV of the Wild Life (Protection) Act (Appendix III). Of the 75 species in Schedule I, two species namely, the Hunting Leopard and the Lesser One-horned Rhinoceros are supposed to be extinct from India, and 32 species are highly endangered. These species are Lion-tailed Macaque, Phayre's Leaf Monkey, Hoolock Gibbon, Chinese Pangolin, Malayan Sun Bear, Red Panda, Ratel, Malabar Civet, Desert Cat, Marbled Cat, Pallas Cat, Golden Cat, Rusty-spotted Cat, Caracal, Indian Lion, Snow Leopard, Great one-horned Rhinoceros, Indian Wild Ass, Kiang, Pigmy Hog, Musk Deer, Thamin, Hangul, Swamp deer, Four-horned Antelope, Yak, Indian Buffalo, Himalayan Tahr, Markhor, Nilgiri Tahr, Hispid Hare, and Small Travanvore Flying Squirrel (Agrawal *et al.* 1991). From Table 4, it is clear that practically all the species of mammals except insectivores, tree-shrews, bats and murid rodents are threatened, of course to a varying degree.

**Table - 4****Number of endangered species of mammals (order-wise) in India**

Orders	Total No. of known Species from India	No. of endangered species			
		I	II	III	IV
Insectivora	28	—	—	—	1
Scandentia	3	—	—	—	—
Chiroptera	110	—	—	—	—
Primates	15	9	6	—	—
Carnivora	55	28+(1)	21+(4)	—	6+(1)
Artiodactyla	32	24	—	8	—
Perissodactyla	3	3	—	—	—
Cetacea	29	3	26	—	—
Sirenia	1	1	—	—	—
Proboscidea	1	1	—	—	—
Lagomorpha	10	1	—	—	9
Rodentia	101	2	16	—	2
Pholidota	2	2	—	—	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>19</b>

*Figures within brackets denote subspecies.*

### VALUE

Mammals are friends as well as foes to mankind. Large scale destruction of crops is caused by rodents, monkeys, langurs, deer, antelopes, wild boars, hares, elephants, etc. Fruit-bats and squirrels cause damage to orchards. On the other hand, many of the mammalian species are exploited by human beings for their skin, fur and wool (deer, antelopes, large and small cats, sheep), horns and antlers (rhinoceros, cervids and bovids), tusks (elephants), musk (musk deer) liver and gall bladder (bears), bezoar, meat and oil (whales), etc. Above all many of the species are killed for their meat value. The bones of tigers are used in the preparation of medicine and soup in China. Whales and dolphins are captured for their oil, fins are used for soup, skin for making leather and the flesh as fish meal and manure. Tamed elephants are used for dragging logs, carrying people in difficult terrains and form part of the royal processions. The domesticated species are used as pets, beasts of burden etc., and are a good source of wool, meat and milk.

## THREATS

The human population of India which is about 17% of the total humanity of the world is highly disproportionate keeping in view the land area of the country which is hardly 2% of the world's total land mass (Jairajpuri 1991). Still it is increasing with a galloping rate. This has necessitated developments in various spheres like the urbanisation, construction of dams and hydro-electric projects, encroachment of land for agriculture, industry, mining operation, etc., which have brought severe imbalances in several ecosystems particularly the forests and wetlands of the country. The result is that the forest resources of the country have declined to about 22% of the total geographical area. This, in turn, has severely effected the wildlife. Further, the undue exploitation of several species of wild animals and their parts for trade, medicinal purposes and flesh have threatened many of them to a point of no return. Competition for food and transmission of diseases by domestic livestock are other threats to herbivores, particularly to cervids and bovids.

The threats to dolphins in Indian waters are due to the prevalence of gill-net fishery along the Sri Lankan coast and their vulnerability to fishing gears, and reckless killing along the southeast coast of India. Further, fast deterioration of ecology due to anthropomorphic activities is aiding in the disappearance of whales and dolphins from the Indian coasts.

## CONSERVATION

The primary concern of conservation is to maintain a balanced ecosystem. If the latter is preserved, animal species contained in these ecosystems will have greater chances of survival. To achieve this goal, a network of scientifically managed wildlife protected areas in representative biogeographical regions have been established in India where the forestry operations and other usages such as grazing by domestic livestocks are completely banned. About 151, 342 sq. km. or 4.6% of the total land area of the country is proposed to be gradually brought under this network, from an area of 109,652 sq. km. or 3.3% during 1987 (Jairajpuri, 1991).

In order to conserve whatever remains of our wildlife, the Government of India has taken various steps aimed at prohibiting killing, trapping or collecting by any other means of such species of animals which are endangered or rare, and at regulating exploitation of those species which, though apparently in abundance at present, may become rare if utilised excessively (Agrawal 1989).

A general legislation was enforced in 1972 under the name of Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, for providing legal protection to wildlife, particularly to endangered species of mammals, birds and reptiles. Subsequently, endangered and scientifically valuable species of insects were included in the list. The Act contains a set of rules governing the protection of wild animals, and schedules I to V, naming the species of animals governed by the said Act. As mentioned earlier, depending upon the degree of threat, four levels of protection (Schedules I to IV) have been accorded to species. The Schedule V includes vermins. The preservation of wild animals and forests have been included in the concurrent list as per 42nd amendment of the Indian constitution.

To control trade in endangered species of animals in the international market, a convention has been ratified by nearly all the important countries of the world which is known as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES, 1973). India became a party to it in 1976. This convention has framed rules and regulations to control the world-wide trade in endangered species of wild animals and their products. It consists of 25 articles. Three levels of protection (Appendix I to III) have been accorded to species, depending upon the degree of threat.

The programme of translocation of the endangered species of mammals like the Greater one-horned Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) from Kaziranga to Dudwa National Park in Uttar Pradesh, and the captive breeding programme as of the Manipur Brow-antlered Deer (*Cervus eldi eldi*) in some of the Indian zoos have already been taken up. Further, a comprehensive programme to breed some of the endangered species of mammals in Indian zoos has recently been finalised by the Central Zoo Authority of India.

For the conservation of endangered species of mammals, species-oriented programmes are being taken up in India by the Central and State Governments independently as well as manned and funded by WWF—I, FAO, UNDP, IUCN, etc. The foremost being the project Hangul (1970), Gir Lion Sanctuary project (1968-72), project Tiger (1973), Manipur Brow-antlered Deer project (1977), Himalayan Musk Deer project (1979), and the Lesser Cats Project (1981). Recent addition to this list is the 'Elephant Project' initiated in 1992 by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India. The main thrust of these projects was on the conservation of habitats in which these animals live in, restoration of their quality, and to eliminate all forms of exploitation (both of habitats and animals) by human-beings. The results are encouraging. These measures not only helped to improve the degraded habitats but also there is an increase in the population of both the

prey and predator-species. The main constraint of these projects is to shift the local residents from the core areas and their socio-economic upliftment.

### FUTURE DIRECTION

Habitat restoration, proper management and strict implementation of the Wildlife Act, along with socio-economic development of the local community are desirable to restore wildlife, in future. Public understanding and support are crucial for conservation. Long term studies are required to determine the habitat requirements, population dynamics of animals, etc. A centre for the conservation of India's National heritage in animals may be established in the country. This could specialise in developing a DNA-library of genetic material of species under threat of extinction (Swaminathan, 1990).

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## *Appendix*

### **LIST OF INDIAN EXPERTISE**

#### **PROTOZOA**

- Das, A. K.**, Zoological Survey of India, 'M' Block, New Alipore, Calcutta-700 053.  
[Freeliving Protozoa : Sarcodina and Ciliophora; Symbiotic Protozoa : Zoomastigophorea and Ciliophora].
- Halder, D. P.**, Department of Zoology, University of Kalyani-741 235, Nadia, West Bengal. [Parasitic Protozoa : Gregarinia and Myxozoa].
- Kalavati, C.**, Department of Zoology, Andhra University, Vishakhapatnam-530 003, Andhra Pradesh. [Parasitic Protozoa : Microspora and Myxozoa].
- Krishnamurthy, R.**, Department of Zoology, Marathawada University, Aurangabad-431 004, Maharashtra. [Parasitic Protozoa : Coccidia and Zoomastigophorea].
- Mandal, A. K.**, Retired Scientist, Zoological Survey of India, 'M' Block, New Alipore, Calcutta-700 053. [Parasitic Protozoa : Coccidia and Kinetoplastida].
- Mishra, K. K.**, Rishi Bankim College, Naihati, North 24-Parganas, West Bengal.  
[Parasitic Protozoa : Kinetoplastida].
- Nandi, N. C.**, Zoological Survey of India, 'M' Block, New Alipore, Calcutta-700 053.  
[Parasitic Protozoa : Haemosporida and Myxozoa].
- Ray, R.**, Department of Zoology, Presidency College, Calcutta, West Bengal. [Parasitic Protozoa : Blood parasites of amphibia].
- Sarkar, N.**, Rishi Bankim College, Naihati, North 24-Parganas, West Bengal. [Parasitic Protozoa : Myxozoa].
- Tiwari, D. N.**, Zoological Survey of India, 'M' Block, New Alipore, Calcutta-700 053.  
[Symbiotic Protozoa : Zoomastigophorea].

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## ROTIFERA

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