

Binturong

The Binturong, also known as the bearcat, is a fascinating mammal that is native to Southeast Asia. Despite its name, the Binturong is not closely related to either bears or cats, but is instead a member of the Viverridae family, which also includes civets and genets. The Binturong is known for its unusual appearance, with shaggy black fur, a prehensile tail, and distinctive scent glands that produce a musky odor. In this article, we will explore the fascinating world of the Binturong, including its habitat, behavior, and conservation status.

The Binturong is a highly adaptable animal that can be found in a range of habitats, from dense rainforests to mangrove swamps. It is primarily arboreal and spends much of its time in trees, using its prehensile tail to navigate through the canopy. Binturongs are omnivorous, feeding on a variety of foods including fruits, insects, small mammals, and birds. They are also known to have a taste for carrion and have been observed scavenging on animal carcasses. Despite their relatively wide distribution, Binturongs are considered vulnerable due to habitat loss and hunting for their meat and fur. Conservation efforts are being made to protect this species, including the establishment of protected areas and educational programs to reduce hunting pressure.

Binturongs are found in several countries in Southeast Asia, including India. In India, Binturongs are known to occur in the northeastern states such as Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and Meghalaya. They are also found in parts of the Western Ghats in southern India. However, due to their secretive nature and nocturnal habits, Binturongs are not often seen in the wild. In India, Binturongs are protected under Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, which prohibits their hunting and trade. Despite this, habitat loss and hunting for their meat and fur remain major threats to the species in India, and

conservation efforts are needed to ensure their survival in the wild.

Sl No.	Characteristics	Description
1	Common Name	Binturong
2	Scientific Name	Binturong arctictis
3	Length	70-90 cm
4	Colour	Dark brown or black fur
5	Height / girth (For animals and birds – height, for fishes / reptiles – girth of the body)	71 cm
6	Tail length (if its mammal	70 cm
7	Height till shoulder (If its mammal)	
8	Average weight	18-31 kg
9	Food habits	Omnivorous they have particular fondness for figs
10	Habitat	They are found in southeast asia
11	Any interesting facts about them	They have a distinctive scent that is similar to popcorn or chips

Features

The binturong, also known as the Asian bearcat, is a species of mammal belonging to the Viverridae family. The binturong's fur is long and shaggy, with a predominantly black coloration. However, they may also have lighter shades of brown, grey, or even reddish-brown on their fur.

Binturongs have a distinctive, flat, and elongated face with small eyes and rounded ears. They have a prehensile tail that is as long as their body, which they use for balance and climbing. Their paws are equipped with semi-retractable claws that can grasp tree trunks and branches. Binturongs also have scent glands located beneath their tails, which they use to mark their territory. Binturongs are sexually dimorphic, with males typically larger than females. Adult males can weigh between 20-30 kg (44-66 lbs) and measure 70-90 cm (28-35 in) in length, excluding the tail. Females, on the other hand, weigh around 11-14 kg (24-31 lbs) and measure 60-70 cm (24-28 in) in length, excluding the tail. Binturongs are primarily arboreal and can climb trees with ease. They have an excellent sense of smell and use it to navigate their surroundings and find food. Binturongs are known for their ability to emit a musky scent that smells like popcorn, which they use to communicate with other binturongs and mark their territory. They are also considered to be one of the few carnivores that have a primarily herbivorous diet, feeding mainly on fruits and leaves.

Food Habits

In terms of food habits, binturongs are omnivores, feeding on a variety of foods such as fruits, leaves, small mammals, birds, reptiles, and insects. In the wild, their diet can vary depending on the season and the availability of food. Binturongs are also known to raid crops, particularly those that are fruit-bearing, which can bring them into conflict with humans.

Habitats

Binturongs are found in Southeast Asia, including countries such as India, Thailand, Cambodia, and Indonesia. In India, they are primarily found in the northeastern states of Assam,

Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Nagaland.

Binturongs are arboreal animals and are typically found in tropical rainforests, mangrove swamps, and other forested areas. They are particularly well adapted to life in the trees and are known for their ability to climb and move around in the forest canopy.

Vulnerable Species

Binturongs are listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, and their populations are declining across their range, including in India.

In India, binturongs are primarily found in the northeastern states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Nagaland.. They are threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation due to deforestation, as well as hunting for their meat, fur, and other body parts.

It is difficult to estimate the exact population numbers of binturongs in India due to their secretive nature and the difficulty of conducting surveys in their forested habitats. However, the population is believed to be decreasing, and the species is considered to be at risk of extinction in the wild.

Protected Areas

Binturongs are found in several national parks and protected areas in India, particularly in the northeastern states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Nagaland. Here are some national parks in India where binturongs can be found:

Namdapha National Park, Arunachal Pradesh is located in the eastern Himalayas and is one of the largest protected areas in India. It is home to a variety of rare and endangered species, including binturongs.

Manas National Park, Assam in the foothills of the Himalayas, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is home to a range of wildlife, including tigers, elephants, and binturongs.

Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, Assam is located in the floodplains of the Brahmaputra River and is home to a diverse range of flora and fauna, including binturongs.

Nameri National Park, Assam is known for its diverse birdlife, as well as for being one of the last remaining habitats of the white-winged wood duck. Binturongs are also found here. Pakhui Wildlife Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh is home to a variety of mammals, including binturongs.