

# Indian Hedgehog

The Indian hedgehog, also known as the Indian long-eared hedgehog (*Hemiechinus collaris*), is a species of hedgehog found in the Indian subcontinent. They are small in size, measuring around 17 to 23 centimeters in length, with a weight of around 250 to 350 grams.

Indian hedgehogs have a unique appearance with a long snout and large ears. Their spines are shorter and more sparse compared to other hedgehog species. They are primarily nocturnal and feed on insects, small reptiles, and rodents.

Indian hedgehogs are found in various habitats ranging from arid and semi-arid regions to grasslands and agricultural lands. They are not considered to be threatened or endangered and are known to adapt well to human-modified landscapes. However, like other hedgehog species, they face threats from habitat loss, fragmentation, and roadkill.

Serial No.	Characteristics	Description
1	Common Name	Indian Hedgehog
2	Scientific Name	<i>Paraechinus micropus</i>
3	Length	14 to 20 centimetres
4	Colour	Dark brown on the upper side and pale on the belly
5	Height/Girth	Height: up to 10 centimetres
6	Tail length	Tail length: up to 4 centimetres
7	Height till shoulder (if mammal)	6-8 cm
8	Average Weight	250 to 400 grams

9	Food Habits	Insects, small mammals, reptiles, and vegetation
10	Habitat	India, Pakistan, and parts of the Middle East
11	Interesting Facts	Indian hedgehogs are nocturnal and can roll into a tight ball for protection. They also have poor eyesight and rely on their sense of smell and hearing to navigate their surroundings.

## Features

The Indian Hedgehog (*Paraechinus micropus*) is a small spiny mammal found in the Indian subcontinent. It has a distinctive appearance, with a round body covered in sharp spines, small eyes, and a pointed snout.

The Indian Hedgehog has a brownish-grey fur colour on its back and sides, with a white underbelly. The spines on its back are made of keratin and are hollow, with black and white alternating bands. The spines serve as a defence mechanism against predators, and the Indian Hedgehog can roll up into a ball to protect its vulnerable underside.

Males and females of the Indian Hedgehog are similar in size, measuring around 20-25 cm in length and weighing between 250-500 grams. They have short legs and long, sharp claws, which they use to dig burrows and forage for food.

Indian Hedgehogs are primarily nocturnal and solitary animals, and they are omnivorous, feeding on a variety of foods such as insects, small mammals, fruits, and seeds. They are also known to scavenge on carrion and occasionally feed on snakes and scorpions.

One unique characteristic of the Indian Hedgehog is its ability to resist venom from certain snakes and scorpions, due to specialised enzymes in its blood that can neutralise the toxins.

## Food Habits

As omnivorous animals, Indian Hedgehogs have a varied diet that includes insects, small mammals, fruits, seeds, and occasionally carrion. They are known to forage at night, using their keen sense of smell to locate food sources, and can cover long distances in search of food.

In agricultural areas, Indian Hedgehogs may feed on crops such as groundnuts, melons, and cucumbers, causing some damage to farmers' yields. However, they also provide ecosystem services by preying on insects and rodents that can be harmful to crops.

## Habitats

Indian Hedgehogs (*Paraechinus micropus*) are found in the Indian subcontinent, primarily in dry and arid regions such as deserts, scrublands, and rocky terrains. They are distributed across several states in India, including Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, and parts of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

In terms of habitat, Indian Hedgehogs prefer areas with low vegetation cover, rocky outcrops, and sandy soils where they can dig burrows and find shelter. They are known to inhabit agricultural fields, orchards, and human settlements, where they can find food and water sources.

# Vulnerable Species

Indian Hedgehogs (*Paraechinus micropus*) are listed as a species of “Least Concern” on the IUCN Red List, which means that they are not considered to be at immediate risk of extinction. However, population numbers are poorly known, and local declines due to habitat loss and fragmentation have been reported in some areas.

Indian Hedgehogs are found across several states in India, but their exact population numbers are unknown. The species is not commonly studied, and there is a lack of population data.

The main threats to Indian Hedgehogs in India are habitat loss and fragmentation due to human activities such as agriculture, urbanisation, and industrialization. These activities can reduce the availability of suitable habitats and food sources for the species, which can lead to population declines.

Another threat to Indian Hedgehogs is the use of pesticides and other agrochemicals, which can harm their health and reduce the availability of prey species. Road accidents and predation by domestic dogs and cats are also potential threats to their survival.

## Protected Areas

There are no specific national parks in India that are designated for Indian Hedgehogs (*Paraechinus micropus*). However, these hedgehogs are found in several protected areas and wildlife sanctuaries in India, where they receive some level of protection.

Some of the protected areas where Indian Hedgehogs are known to occur include the Desert National Park in Rajasthan, the Great Rann of Kutch Wildlife Sanctuary in Gujarat, and the Kalesar National Park in Haryana. These protected areas

provide suitable habitats for the species, with low vegetation cover, rocky outcrops, and sandy soils that hedgehogs can use to dig burrows and find shelter.

While Indian Hedgehogs are not specifically targeted for conservation in these protected areas, they benefit from the overall protection of the habitats in which they live. These protected areas also provide opportunities for researchers and conservationists to study the species and understand its ecological requirements better.