

Indian spotted chevrotain

India’s herbivore biodiversity is incredibly rich and diverse, with a wide variety of species found across the country. From the majestic Indian elephant to the elusive Indian rhinoceros, there is no shortage of fascinating herbivores in India. Other notable herbivores include the Indian bison, sambar deer, chital deer, wild boar, and various antelope species. Many of these species are highly adapted to the unique habitats found in India, including tropical forests, grasslands, and wetlands. In addition to their ecological importance, many of these herbivores are also culturally significant, playing important roles in traditional Indian folklore and mythology. Overall, the richness of India’s herbivore biodiversity is a testament to the country’s incredible natural heritage.

The Indian mouse deer, also known as the Indian chevrotain, is a small, shy, and elusive species of ungulate found in the forests of India. They are the smallest ungulates in Asia, standing at only about 30-40 centimetres tall at the shoulder. Their small size and camouflage make them difficult to spot in the wild. Mouse deer are primarily herbivorous, feeding on a variety of leaves, fruits, and shoots. Despite their cute and harmless appearance, they are important prey for many predators, including leopards, tigers, and pythons. Unfortunately, habitat loss and fragmentation due to human activities are major threats to this species, which has led to declines in their populations in many parts of their range.

Sl NO	Characteristics	Description
1	Common Name	Indian spotted chevrotain
2	Scientific Name	Moschiola indica
3	Length	45-50 cm

4	Colour	Rusty brown with white spots on back and sides
5	Height / girth (For animals and birds – height, for fishes / reptiles – girth of the body)	20-30 cm
6	Tail length (if its mammal	2-6 cm
7	Height till shoulder (If its mammal)	25-30 cm
8	Average weight	0.6-1 kg
9	Food habits	Herbivorous feeds on fallen fruits and leaves
10	Habitat	Forests scrublands and grassland of india
11	Any interesting facts about them	Also called mouse deer, they are known for their shy and elusive nature .

Feature

The Indian Spotted Chevrotain, also known as the Indian Mouse Deer or the Indian Spotted Deer, is a small, nocturnal ungulate species found in India and Nepal.

The Indian Spotted Chevrotain has a brownish-yellow coat with white spots on its back and sides. Its underbelly is lighter in color. They are small in size, with males weighing around 5-6 kg and females weighing slightly less, around 4-5 kg. They have a slender build, short legs, and a small head with large, dark eyes. They have small, pointed ears and short tail. The Indian Spotted Chevrotain is known for its unique behaviour of standing motionless when they sense danger, which is known as “freeze behaviour.” They also have a distinctive scent gland on their forehead, which they use to mark their territory. Males are slightly larger than females, with slightly longer

canine teeth. However, it is difficult to distinguish males from females based on physical appearance alone.

Food Habits

The Indian Spotted Chevrotain is primarily herbivorous, and their diet includes a variety of plant materials such as leaves, buds, fruits, and flowers. They also eat fallen fruits and nuts on the forest floor. They are selective feeders and choose plants based on their taste and nutritional content.

Habitats

The Indian Spotted Chevrotain is primarily found in forested areas of India and Nepal, particularly in the Western Ghats, Eastern Ghats, and the forests of northeastern India. They prefer dense underbrush and thickets near streams or other water sources, as well as areas with plenty of fallen leaves and twigs to hide in.

In India, they are found in the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Odisha, and the northeastern states. In Sri Lanka, they are found in the lowland rainforests of the southwestern part of the island.

Vulnerable Species

The Indian Spotted Chevrotain, also known as the Indian Mouse Deer, is considered to be a vulnerable species in India. According to the IUCN Red List, their population trend is decreasing, and they are facing several threats that have contributed to their declining numbers. It has been put as "Least Concern" species as per IUCN.

One of the primary threats to the Indian Spotted Chevrotain is habitat loss and fragmentation due to deforestation, agriculture, and urbanisation. This has resulted in a

reduction of suitable habitat and has also increased the chances of human-wildlife conflict.

Hunting and poaching for their meat and skin is another significant threat to the species. The Indian Spotted Chevrotain is also hunted for medicinal purposes in some parts of India, as its meat and body parts are believed to have curative properties.

Due to these threats, the population of the Indian Spotted Chevrotain is estimated to be declining. Exact population numbers are difficult to determine due to their nocturnal and elusive behaviour, but it is believed that their populations are fragmented and isolated.

Protected Areas

Bandipur National Park – located in Karnataka, this National Park is home to a variety of wildlife, including Indian Spotted Chevrotains.

Mudumalai National Park – located in Tamil Nadu, this National Park is situated at the tri-junction of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka, and is home to many species of fauna and flora, including Indian Spotted Chevrotains.

Periyar National Park – located in Kerala, this National Park is known for its rich biodiversity and is home to many rare and endangered species, including Indian Spotted Chevrotains.