

Particoloured squirrel

flying

India boasts an impressive array of squirrel species, each with its own unique traits and geographical range. Among the most iconic is the Indian giant squirrel, with its stunning multicolored fur, inhabiting the forests of southern India. Urban and rural areas are also teeming with Indian palm squirrels, renowned for their lively antics. Gardens and forests across India harbor the five-striped palm squirrel, featuring five distinctive stripes that set it apart from other squirrels. While squirrels are widely admired for their vital role in seed dispersal and forest regeneration, they can also pose a nuisance to homeowners, damaging property and electrical wiring. Nonetheless, these captivating creatures form an essential part of India's diverse and invaluable wildlife, adding to the country's rich biological heritage.

Flying squirrel in India

Flying squirrels are an extraordinary group of squirrels found in India and other parts of the world. India is home to several species of flying squirrels, including the Indian giant flying squirrel, the red giant flying squirrel, and the Malabar giant flying squirrel. These nocturnal creatures have adapted to life in the trees, where they can glide from one branch to another using their skin flaps or patagia. Their large, expressive eyes allow them to see well in the dark, and their soft, fluffy fur helps them stay warm during cold nights. Flying squirrels play an important role in forest ecosystems, where they help to disperse seeds and pollinate flowers.

Particoloured flying squirrel

Sl No.	Characteristics	Description
1	Common Name	Particoloured flying squirrel
2	Scientific Name	Hylopetes alboniger
3	Length	25 to 30 cm
4	Colour	Brownish-grey or reddish-brown
5	Height/Girth (cm)	Body girth: 8 to 12 cm
6	Tail Length (cm)	18 to 22 cm (approx.)
7	Height till Shoulder (cm)	10 to 15 cm (approx.)
8	Average Weight	70 to 150 grams
9	Food Habits	Mainly feeds on tree sap, insects, and fruits
10	Habitat	Found in dense forests and woodland areas across Southeast Asia, including India, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines
11	Interesting Facts	Particoloured flying squirrels have a membrane called patagium which allows them to glide through the air for up to 90 meters in a single glide

Features

The particoloured flying squirrel, also known as the Malayan colugo, is a small arboreal mammal found in Southeast Asia, including India. The species has a distinctive appearance, with a greyish-brown coat on the upper body, and a white belly. The fur on the flanks is a striking yellowish-orange color, which gives the animal its name. The particoloured

flying squirrel has large, round eyes, and a broad, flat tail that it uses to control its movements during gliding.

In terms of size, both males and females are similar, measuring around 35-40 cm in length, including the tail, and weighing between 0.5-1 kg. The particoloured flying squirrel is primarily nocturnal and arboreal, spending much of its time in trees and using its gliding ability to move between them.

One of the special characteristics that particoloured flying squirrels display is their unique way of gliding through the forest canopy. They have a membrane of skin known as a patagium that stretches between their limbs and body, allowing them to glide up to 100 metres in a single jump. The patagium also helps to slow their descent, allowing them to make a controlled landing on a tree trunk or branch. This adaptation helps them to move through the forest canopy with ease, and to avoid predators on the ground.

Food Habits

The diet of particoloured flying squirrels mainly consists of leaves, fruits, flowers, and shoots. They also consume insects and small invertebrates occasionally. In India, the species is known to feed on a variety of fruits such as mango, guava, and jackfruit. They have a special preference for the fruit of fig trees, which makes up a significant portion of their diet.

Habitat

The particoloured flying squirrel is found in a wide range of habitats throughout Southeast Asia, including rainforests, secondary forests, and plantations. In India, the species is primarily found in the northeastern parts of the country, in states such as Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh.

Vulnerable Species

The particoloured flying squirrel is not currently listed as a threatened species on the IUCN Red List. However, like many other arboreal mammals, it is threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation due to deforestation, urbanisation, and agricultural expansion.

In India, the particoloured flying squirrel is not extensively studied, and population estimates are not available. However, it is believed to be relatively common in its range, and populations are thought to be stable in some areas. The species is protected under Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, which prohibits hunting and trade of the animal or its body parts.

Protected Areas

Although there is no specific national park in India dedicated to the conservation of the Particoloured flying squirrel, they can be found in the following national parks and wildlife sanctuaries in Northeast India.

Located in Arunachal Pradesh, Namdapha National Park is known for its diverse range of flora and fauna, including several endangered species such as the Hoolock Gibbon, Clouded Leopard, and Tiger. The park is spread over an area of 1,985 square kilometres and is home to around 450 species of birds, including several rare and endemic species.

Namdapha is also one of the few places in India where one can spot all four big cat species- the Bengal tiger, Indian leopard, clouded leopard, and snow leopard. The park has a significant population of Particoloured flying squirrel, and they can be spotted here during night safaris.

Dampa Tiger Reserve is located in Mizoram and covers an area of 550 square kilometres. The reserve is home to a variety of

wildlife, including several species of deer, primates, and birds. The Particoloured flying squirrel is one of the many nocturnal species found in the reserve. The reserve is known for its tiger population and is also home to several other big cat species such as leopard and clouded leopard.

Khangchendzonga National Park is located in Sikkim and is spread over an area of 1784 square kilometers. The park is named after Mount Khangchendzonga, the third highest peak in the world. The park is home to a diverse range of flora and fauna, including several endangered species such as the Snow Leopard, Himalayan Black Bear, and Red Panda. The Particoloured flying squirrel can be found in the park's dense forests, but they are quite elusive.

Pakhui Tiger Reserve is located in Arunachal Pradesh and covers an area of 862 square kilometers. The reserve is known for its tiger population and is home to several other endangered species such as the Asiatic Elephant, Indian Bison, and Clouded Leopard. The reserve has a significant population of Particoloured flying squirrels, and they can be spotted here during night safaris.

Located in Arunachal Pradesh, Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary is known for its diverse range of bird species, including several rare and endemic species. The sanctuary is spread over an area of 217 square kilometers and is home to several endangered species such as the Red Panda, Asiatic Elephant, and Clouded Leopard. The Particoloured flying squirrel can be found here, but they are quite difficult to spot due to their nocturnal nature.