

# First photographic evidence and second record of Indian Hedgehog *Paraechinus micropus* (Blyth, 1846) from Maharashtra, India

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In general, hedgehogs are recognized by the presence of numerous short spines covering whole body except facial and under parts and a pig-like snout. Three species of hedgehogs are reported from India namely: *Hemiechinus collaris* (Gray) Indian Long-eared or collared Hedgehog, *Paraechinus micropus* (Blyth) Indian Hedgehog and *Paraechinus nudiventris* (Horsfield) Bare-bellied Hedgehog (Hutterer 2005).

First author (AS) has undertaken a project to study the breeding biology of frogs in northern Maharashtra during rainy season. On 8<sup>th</sup> August 2015, while locating the frogs in an area of open scrubland near Amali village (21°37'42.34" N & 74°0'11.97"E), Akkalkuwa Taluka in Nandurbar district, Maharashtra he came across a small spiny animal like hedgehog (Fig. 1) at night time. Lateron, it was identified and confirmed as Indian Hedgehog, *Paraechinus micropus* (Blyth, 1846) (Erinaceomorpha: Erinaceidae) by second author (SST) on the basis of following characters: Pale rufous body with grayish-white hairs on forehead and cheeks; limbs, belly, muzzle and areas around eyes clothed with reddish-brown hairs; spines on the forehead divided by a longitudinal naked furrow and small rounded ears (Menon, 2014).

The Indian hedgehogs are found in desert, semi-desert, rocky and grassland areas with hedges and bushes. They are nocturnal and crepuscular, semi-fossorial and terrestrial in habits (Molur *et al.*, 2005, Alfred *et al.*, 2006). They are listed as Least Concern as per IUCN Red List of Threatened Species Version 2015.2 (Chakraborty *et al.*, 2008).



Fig 1. Hedgehog

Corbet and Hill (1992) recorded the distributional range of Indian Hedgehog from Indus through Rajasthan and Gujarat, east to Agra (Uttar Pradesh) and south to at least Bombay (Mumbai) and Pune; as well as in Punjab (Alfred *et al.*, 2006, Pradhan & Talmale, 2012). Molur *et al.* (2005) have noted number of their localities from Rajasthan and Gujarat on the basis of published records and personal communications. Further, they have mentioned a single record of Indian Hedgehog from Toranmal (21°47' N & 74°28' E), Nandurbar district of Maharashtra sighted by G. Jathar. However, on personal communication with Dr. Girish Jathar by e-mail has stated that he never seen such animal in that area during his owl studies. Probably, this sighting could be by another observer.

Therefore, the present sighting of Indian Hedgehog could be the first photographic evidence and second record from Maharashtra, India.

A perusal of literature revealed that there is no much information available on the previous and

recent distributional records of Indian Hedgehogs from Maharashtra and particularly in their distributional range up to Mumbai and Pune. According to Menon (2003, 2014) and Molur *et al.* (2005) their population status is unknown and distribution is fragmented. It seems that because of their nocturnal and semi-fossorial habits there are no much studies undertaken on the species from Maharashtra. Hence, there is a need to undertake systematic night surveys to study their distributional status, population ecology, breeding habits in semi-deserted tracts of Dhule, Nasik, Ahmednagar and Pune districts as well as further south of their distributional range

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