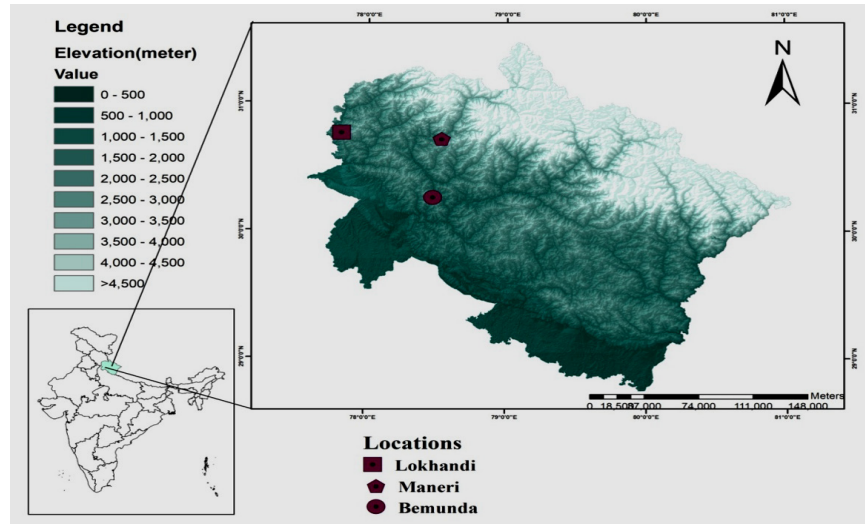




# Photo record of the Red Giant Gliding Squirrel from the Garhwal Himalaya region of Uttarakhand

Worldwide, there are 45 known species of gliding squirrels, from which 17 are reported from India (Thorington et al. 2012; Thorington & Hoffmann 2005). Past studies reveal the distribution of Red Giant Gliding Squirrel RGGS (Least Concern species) throughout Indian Himalaya, southern part of China, and southeastern Asia (Chetia et al. 2024; Duckworth 2016). In this article we are reporting the photographic evidence of RGGS (*Petaurista petaurista albiventer*) presence in western Garhwal region (adjacent to Himachal Pradesh boundary) of Uttarakhand Himalaya, although the photographic presence recently reported from far eastern Kumaun division of Uttarakhand (Chetia et al. 2024).

During present study we captured the photographs of this mammal from three different sites, namely, Lokhandi (Dehradun), Maneri (Uttarkashi) and Bemunda (Tehri Garhwal). Lokhandi



Photographs of Red Giant Gliding Squirrel taken in Garhwal region of Uttarakhand. © Devendra Singh.



Red Giant Gliding Squirrel at Lokhandi, Dehradun, Uttarakhand. © Devendra Singh.

(30.7650°N, 77.8131°E) situated at the elevation of 2,481.21 m and this temperate site having dense Deodar *Cedrus deodara* forest forming the suitable habitat for RGGS to nest and forage. Maneri (30.7222°N, 78.5331°E)



and Bemunda (30.2628°N, 78.3564°E) sites are located at the elevation of 1,640.99 m and 935.94 m, respectively. These both sites are having lower-temperate and sub-tropical climatic condition respectively, in which Maneri



with mixed forest dominated by Pine *Pinus roxburghii* and Bemunda with Sal *Shorea robusta* and Pine *Pinus roxburghii* trees. Due to habitat degradation, shifting cultivation, forest-fires, increased human settlement, accidental mortality from vehicle collisions and other anthropogenic disturbances the RGGs' population in India is declining (Koli 2016).

Sighting of *Petaurista petaurista albiventer* were recorded on the trail using foreclaz head lamps. The photographs of RGGs were taken using Nikon D90 Camera through opportunistic sampling. The first individual was recorded from

Lokhandi in the month of September 2024 at 2330 h on the cliff which may be associated with opportunistic feeding or surprise attacks on small insects or bird nests.

While other two individuals were recorded from two different sites of Garhwal Himalaya, namely, Maneri and Bemunda during the October 2024 at dusk time and mid-night, respectively. In Bemunda, the length of walked trail range was between 1.8 km. The RGGs observation site (Maneri and Lokhandi) is located close to road in between a mixed temperate evergreen forest.



Red Giant Gliding Squirrel at Bemunda, Tehri Garhwal, Uttarakhand. © Devendra Singh.



Red Giant Gliding Squirrel at Maneri, Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand. © Devendra Singh.



Morphologically, these squirrels have thin body, are arboreal, and have long, furred tails. It uses its elastic skin, stretched between the wrist and the ankles for gliding (Choudhury 2013; Menon 2023). The squirrel has pale orange fur near the base of the patagium and a reddish-brown dorsal colour. It also has a greyish-white ventral surface (Prater 1971; Chetia et al. 2024).

Although there was no visual proof (photographs) from earlier research reports of RGGs distribution throughout the Garhwal Himalaya region. These are the first photo evidences of distribution from the Garhwal Himalayan region. So, the present effort provides valuable insights about variety of habitat use by RGGs.

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