

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON LONG-EARED AND PALE HEDGEHOGS IN GUJARAT

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On the night of 13 October 2000, around 22: 30 hr, I observed a Long-eared Hedgehog (*Hemiechinus collaris*) feeding on insects under a lamp post near the lighthouse at Porbander City. I observed the animal for about 30 minutes and noticed that the shy animal ran behind the bushes at any slight disturbance or the appearance of a vehicle. I collected the Hedgehog for a closer examination. The specimen was a male and had dark black coloured spines on the back and the under body part had smooth black coloured fur. Its long left ear was heavily infected by ticks. The animal weighed 450g.

Little information is available on the distribution of the species in literature, except that the species is distributed in dry plains and deserts of Pakistan and India (Kachchh, Rajasthan, Punjab and the former N.W.F.P. and the neighboring areas) (Prater, 1995). In addition, Acharya (1949) mentioned that the species is distributed in northern and southern Gujarat but he has not mentioned any specific locality about the species, except records from Palanpur and Dissa. Based on a photograph of the species, Singh (1998) made a statement that the species is found in Little Rann of Kachchh, also.

I have recorded the species in different parts of Gujarat State, during the last ten years (Table 1). The species is distributed widely in Gujarat State along with another smaller species of Pale Hedgehog (*Hemiechinus micropus*) but is not as common. Both species share same distribution range in Gujarat and the same habitat.

I observed an interesting feeding behavior of a Pale Hedgehog during my recent visit to Narayan Sarovar Wildlife Sanctuary, Kachchh District. A Pale Hedgehog was found dead on the road near Panandhro Village run over by a vehicle. On the second night I saw a live pale hedgehog on the same road (near Varma nagar) feeding on a dead Monitor Lizard (*Varanus bengalensis*), another victim of vehicular traffic. This indicated that the previously found dead Pale Hedgehog could have been a victim of a speeding vehicle while feeding on a roadkill. The same night, I saw Long-eared Hedgehog at the same spot I had found

Table 1. Long-eared Hedgehog (*Hemiechinus collaris*) recorded in different locations in Gujarat State.

Location	Date of record
Alembic Colony, Vadodara City, Vadodara District.	12.iv.1989
Out scert of Surendranagar, Surendranagar District	xii.1990
Godhara, Panchmahal District	3.iii.1998
Khijadia, Rampara Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajkot District	16.ix.1998
Hingolgadh Nature Education sanctuary, Rajkot District	25.x.1998
Near Sanand, Ahmedabad District	4.iii.2000
Near Tuga Village, Kachchh Desert Sanctuary, Kachchh District	6.iii.2000
Panandhro, Narayan Sarovar Sanctuary, Kachchh District	22.viii.2000
Porbander City, Porbander District	13.x.2000

the dead Pale Hedgehog.

As a zoo-man, I have some experience of these two species in captivity. Pale Hedgehog is easier to keep since it accepts food, especially vegetable items and survives long time in captive condition. On the other hand Long-eared hedgehog does not accept food and does not survive for long in captivity.

According to CAMP (Conservation Assessment and Management Plan) workshop 1997 (Molur *et al.*, 1998) both the species are evaluated as Lower Risk least concern. However, these smaller and lesser-know mammalian species need special attention. It is my experience with the species that in the earlier days they were found commonly at night when driving down rural roads and often killed by speeding vehicles. Now-a-days they are a rare sight. It is possible that the population of both hedgehog species may have reduced due to habitat destruction, alteration in the habitat, vehicular traffic (roads) and large amount of use of insecticides in agricultural fields.

References

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