

PRESENCE OF INDIAN PALM SQUIRREL *FUNAMBULUS PALMARUM* LINNAEUS IN SOUTHERN ARAVALLIS

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web supplement

Five species of striped squirrels, viz., *F. layardi*, *F. palmarum*, *F. pennantii*, *F. sublineatus* and *F. tristriatus* are confined to South Asia. Four of these species are restricted to southern India and/or Sri Lanka. Only *F. pennantii* occurs in northern India and extends into Pakistan and Nepal (Ellerman, 1961; Ellerman & Morrison-Scott, 1951; Gurung & Singh, 1996; Srinivasulu *et al.*, 2004).

During 1986, while on an academic tour, I heard a few bird-like repeated calls in the forest of Jhadol range in Udaipur district in Rajasthan. The calls were quite similar to that of the Indian Palm Squirrel *F. palmarum*. Unfortunately, I could not see the animal owing to high density of vegetation cover. In 1992, I again started my mission to confirm the presence of Indian Palm Squirrel in southern Aravallis in Rajasthan and Gujarat. With the help of local tribals I succeeded in searching the Indian Palm Squirrel in various forest pockets of Vijai Nagar, Kotra, Jhadol, Onga, Sayra, Mamer, Panarwa and Bokhada forest ranges as given in Table 1 and Figure 1.

F. palmarum is endemic to South Asia. So far, its distribution is known from Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal in India besides Sri Lanka. The present observation confirms the presence of this species in Gujarat and southern Rajasthan where it is present in the dense forest pockets of the Aravallis (Image 1^w).

Funambulus palmarum is a perfect forest species in southern Aravallis. It is totally absent from open forests, agriculture

fields and human habitations. It prefers dense valleys and foothills of interior forest zone. Nests of Indian Palm Squirrel are seen on extremities of *Dendrocalamus strictus* clumps in the foothills of hilly forest areas. The sacred groves of Jargaji and Kamalnath temples in southern Aravallis are the best localities to watch this species at close quarters. Both the sacred groves are situated amidst dense forest. Occasional road kills of this species are seen on Onga-Gogunda road which passes through Nal-Mokhi forest zone (Image 1^w).

The India Palm Squirrel *Funambulus palmarum* is considered a southern Indian species. Six races of *F. palmarum* are in distribution in Sri Lanka and peninsular India (Ellerman & Morrison-Scott, 1951; Ellerman 1961) as given in Table 2. No race of *F. palmarum* has been reported from north of Madhya Pradesh.

The race, confined to southern Aravallis is probably *F. palmarum robertsoni*, which is distributed up to Pachmari, Hoshangabad, Asirgarh, Sival, Nimar, Dhain, Rorighat, Kolkaz, Berar in central India (Ellerman, 1961). The forest habitats near Melghat, Budni, Hoshangabad, Itarsi, Kiratgarh, Dhara Khoh, Maramjhiri, Barsali etc., in central India are quite similar to that of the forests of southern Aravallis. Due to similarity in habitat many peninsular and Deccan floral and faunal species are confined to southern Aravallis; the Southern Indian Giant Flying Squirrel *Petaurista philippensis philippensis* (Elliot, 1839) is one of them. *F. palmarum* and *P. philippensis* are present sympatrically in southern Aravallis.

Extensive surveys are required to know the exact distribution limits of the Indian Palm Squirrel in Rajasthan and Gujarat and whether the population under study is an isolated one or contiguous with those in Madhya Pradesh.

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^w see Image 1 in the web supplement at www.zoosprint.org

Table 1. Presence of Indian Palm Squirrel in southern Aravallis.

	Name of locality	Name of range*	Tehsil (Taluka)	District	State	Density of forest	Local status of animal
1.	Phulwari Wildlife Sanctuary						
	(a) Katawali Jer (Daiya Forest Block)	Panarwa (WL)	Jhadol	Udaipur	Rajasthan	Dense	C
	(b) Bhildi mata (Phulwari Forest Block)	Panarwa (WL)	Jhadol	Udaipur	Rajasthan	Dense	C
	(c) Kanchan (Phulwari Forest Block)	Kotra (WL)	Kotra	Udaipur	Rajasthan	Dense	C
	(d) Luhari Ghati (Phulwari Forest Block)	Kotra (WL)	Kotra	Udaipur	Rajasthan	Dense	C
	(e) Bhader Baosi (Devil Forest Block)	Kotra (WL)	Kotra	Udaipur	Rajasthan	Dense	C
	(f) Kaduwa Mahuda (Dhedmariya Forest Block)	Kotra (WL)	Kotra	Udaipur	Rajasthan	Dense	C
	(g) Dhovaniya Kund and Ghodapadiya (Dhedmariya Forest Block)	Kotra (WL)	Kotra	Udaipur	Rajasthan	Dense	C
	(h) Village Amba (Ada Haldu Forest Block)	Mamer (WL)	Kotra	Udaipur	Rajasthan	Dense	LC
2.	Ram Kunda temple (Ram Kunda Forest Block)	Orna (T)	Jhadol	Udaipur	Rajasthan	Dense	LC
3.	Nal-Mokhi village (Nal-Mokhi Forest Block)	Gogunda (T)	Gogunda	Udaipur	Rajasthan	Dense	LC
4.	Jargaji temple sacred grove	Sayraa (T)	Gogunda	Udaipur	Rajasthan	Dense	C
5.	Southern end of Kubhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary	Bokhaada (WL)	Gogunda	Udaipur	Rajasthan	Dense	LC
6.	Kamalnath temple sacred grove	Jhadol	Jhadol	Udaipur	Rajasthan	Dense	A
7.	Polo forest	Vijai Nagar	Vijai Nagar	Sabar Kantha	Gujarat	Dense	C

* A - Abundant; C - Common; LC - Less Common; WL - Wildlife Range; T - Territorial Range

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Table 2. Distribution of races of *Fumambulus palmarum* in the Indian subcontinent

S.no.	Name of race	Distribution
1.	<i>F. palmarum brodiei</i> Blyth, 1849	Sri Lanka
2.	<i>F. palmarum kelaarti</i> Layard, 1851	Sri Lanka
3.	<i>F. palmarum matugamensis</i> Lindsay, 1926	Sri Lanka
4.	<i>F. palmarum palmarum</i> (Linnaeus 1766)	Bihar, southern India
5.	<i>F. palmarum bellaricus</i> Wroughton, 1916	southern Peninsular India
6.	<i>F. palmarum robertsoni</i> Wroughton, 1916	Central India



Figure 1. Distribution of Indian Palm Squirrel *Fumambulus palmarum* in southern Aravallis

