

Indian Flying fox

Pteropus giganteus

Kingdom Animalia
Phylum Chordata
Class Mammalia
Order Chiroptera
Family Pteropidodae

Native to: India and surrounding countries

Status: Least Concern

The largest threat to the Indian flying fox is disruption of roosting sites by cutting down of trees for road expansion or development. This is particularly devastating for local populations as most colonies have a permanent roosting site.

This is one of the most persecuted bats and has been listed as vermin in India but is listed as Least Concern with the IUCN because it has a wide distribution, presumed large population and occurs in a number of protected areas.

Appearance & Lifespan

The Indian flying fox is the second largest bat with a fox-like head and ears, large eyes, two claws on its wings and no tail. Its fur is coarse, and it has a reddish-brown head with a dark muzzle. The neck and shoulders are yellow, the back is brown and it is yellowish brown on the belly.

The Indian flying fox is about 23 cm long (9"), with a forearm of about 17 cm (6.8"). It has a wingspan of up to 1.2 m (4') and weighs about 20 oz (1.1 lb). This bat can live up to 30 years, however it usually lives to about 15 years of age.



Behavior & Reproduction

The Indian flying fox is considered to be nocturnal, flying at night from tree to tree but is also active during the day, waking to feed from fruit and pollen from their roosting sites. This bat uses sight and smell to maneuver in the dark rather than echolocation, which is typical of most bats.

Their breeding period is from July to October. Mating takes place in the roost, where males will mate with any females nearby; there are no strong couple bonds between males and females. The gestation period is 5 months after which a single offspring is born. When the young bat is born its eyes are open and it is quite alert. It is covered with fur and weighs as much as 9 oz (0.6 lb), nearly 1/3 as much as its mother.

Care and feeding are provided by the female. For the first few weeks of its life, the newborn clings to its mothers and is then nursed for 5 months. The young remain with their mother until they are 8 months old. At this point it is fully grown, but it does not reach sexual maturity until it is 2 years old.

Ecology & Conservation

Indian flying foxes prefer tropical and sub-tropical areas, usually along the coast. They roost in large colonies of hundreds to thousands on one single tree.

This animal feeds on fruit, flowers and nectar and will travel up to 150 km a night (93 mi) in search of food. The Indian flying fox avoids citrus fruits and will only swallow the juice of other ripe fruits, spitting out the pulp.

At the zoo, the Indian flying fox's diet includes hard-boiled eggs, mushrooms, cooked yam, lettuce, spinach, pears, apples, bananas, kiwis, strawberries, mangos, plums, peaches, melon, and minimal citrus fruits.

Did You Know?

1. Fruit eating bats pollinate flowers and distribute their seeds.
2. The Indian flying fox is a strong swimmer and crosses rivers using its wings for flippers.
3. The Indian flying fox roosts in communal sites called camps which may contain several hundred to several thousand flying foxes.

