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*Natural History  
of North East India*

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# MAMMALS

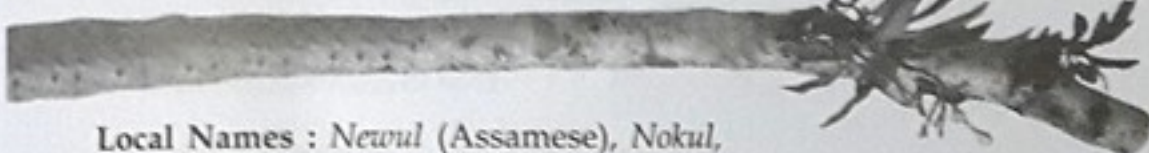
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RASHMI PRAKASH

# Mongoose



Crab-eating Mongoose, Tripura / Anwaruddin Choudhury



**Local Names :** *Newul* (Assamese), *Nokul*, *Newul*, *Beji* (Bengali), *Sodung* (Manipuri).

Three species of mongooses occur in north-eastern India, the SMALL ASIAN or SMALL INDIAN MONGOOSE *Herpestes auropunctatus*, INDIAN GREY MONGOOSE *H. edwardsii* and CRAB-EATING MONGOOSE *H. urva*.

## Identification

The mongooses have brown (Small Asian), grey (Indian Grey) and grizzled buffy-grey/brown (Crab-eating) body colour, uniformly covered with medium thick fur. Their faces are long. The head and body ranges from 21–44 cm (*auropunctatus*), 36–45 cm (*edwardsii*), and 45–50 cm (*urva*). The tail length ranges from 15–33 cm (*auropunctatus*), 32–45 cm (*edwardsii*), and 25–30 cm (*urva*). Their body weight ranges from 0.5–1 kg (*auropunctatus*), 1.4 kg (*edwardsii*), and 1.8–2.3 kg (*urva*) (Menon, 2014). Body is also long with small rounded ears. Legs are short and long tapering tails, short legs, five toes on forelimb and hind limb, and long tapering tails. Their claws are non retractile that helps them in digging. The Crab-eating Mongoose has a white stripe on its neck,

## Distribution and Habitat

The Small Asian Mongoose occurs commonly in village periphery and outskirts of town all over the northeastern India. The Indian Grey Mongoose is rare and the Crab-eating Mongoose is not uncommon in suitable habitats. Grey Mongoose occurs mainly in western Assam. Extraliminally, the Small Asian Indian Mongoose is found from Afghanistan to Java, the Indian Grey Mongoose in the rest of the Indian Subcontinent then to Arabia while the Crab-eating in southeast Asia.

The preferred habitat of Small Asian and Indian Grey Mongoose includes open areas, secondary forests, on trees, sometimes on roadsides. The Crab-eating Mongoose is found in forests, tall grasslands and vicinity of marshes and swamps.

## Ecology and Behaviour

The mongooses have been seen to forage during early and late evening hours of the day. Santiapillai et al (2000) have observed that the Grey Mongoose taking rest in the ground or hollow trees during daytime to avoid the bright and scorching sunlight. The mongooses feed on various small invertebrates, insects, frogs, lizards, young birds and also snakes. They are well known for their ability to fight and kill poisonous snakes.

The mongooses have the special ability to neutralise venoms of snakes due to the presence of specialized acetylcholine receptors in their body. Snake charmers are often seen to possess the Grey Mongoose as pets, which they keep to attract people through demonstrating mock 'snake-mongoose' fight.

While in course of fight with snakes, it has been observed that the mongoose displays aggressiveness by showing its teeth. In turn, the snake widely opens its mouth.

## Conservation

Due to anthropogenic disturbances, their natural habitat is gradually being shrinking. As per IUCN, these three species are Least Concern. CITES has placed them in Appendix III, while they are under Schedule II(II) in The Wild Life (Protection) Act of India.

## References

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# CONSERVING BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

## A Multiscaled Approach



Edited by:

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Nazir Ahmad Bhat

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## About the Book

Biodiversity is indispensable for the proper functioning of ecosystems and the services provided by nature to the global society. But human impacts are causing a decline of this precious resource across spatial and temporal scales, therefore makes it imperative for individual communities and governments to protect and ensure the survival of this depleting biological diversity. This book consists of 25 chapters, which offers novel information and approaches towards biodiversity conservation. It brings to light a wide selection of topics, from the representation of biodiversity across different levels of flora and fauna, to the legal and historical perspectives of biodiversity conservation; from the economic aspects of biological resources to the role of environmental education or remote sensing and geo-morphological mapping on biodiversity conservation. The book goes on to discuss about various other themes like ethno-biology, the nutritional quality of some wild edible plants, the morphological and anatomical analysis of some plant species, the threats and effects of anthropogenic activities on some important plant taxa in particular and biodiversity as a whole. The chapters are attempted at providing an important role in the establishment of integrative observation and assessment of biodiversity, which are unquestionably required for its effective conservation and sustainable use. The book would be as useful to students and teachers as to researchers, policy-makers and conservationists alike.

## About the Authors :



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