



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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Indian Giant Squirrel (Shekru): Sighting in Pune

Published On: 11-01-2026

News Context: During the **All India Tiger Estimation 2026**, the Indian Giant Squirrel was sighted in the Atwan region of the Lonavala/Pune forest division, indicating a healthy, undisturbed forest canopy.

- **Taxonomy & Characteristics:** Locally known as **Shekru**, the Indian Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa indica*) is the **State Animal of Maharashtra**. It is a large-bodied, multi-colored arboreal mammal known for its long, bushy tail.
- **Habitat:** It is endemic to India, primarily found in the tropical evergreen, semi-evergreen, and moist deciduous forests of the **Western Ghats, Eastern Ghats, and Satpura Range**.
- **Significance of Sighting:** Since Shekru is an "obligate arboreal" species (it rarely leaves the treetops), its presence is a **bio-indicator** of a continuous forest canopy and a robust ecosystem.
- **Ecological Role:** Known as the "**Forest Gardener**," it plays a vital role in seed dispersal, aiding forest regeneration.
- **Conservation Status:** * **IUCN:** Least Concern (but populations are fragmented).
- **WPA 1972:** Schedule I.

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