

KYC

About the initiative

The New Forest - the IFS training campus - an area which houses the FRI and its sister institutions including the Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNEA) is also home to a rich biodiversity. These flora and fauna become a part of our neighbourhood while we are at the campus. The campus is also adorned with heritage buildings, museums, nurseries and a beautiful landscape. This initiative is aimed at making us more familiar with our neighbourhood.

The KYC (Know your Campus) initiative started by the IFS 2019 batch in this lockdown period shall come out with a campus related topic each day.

The small Indian civet (*Viverricula indica*) is a small cat like animal native to South and Southeast Asia. It is often cited in our campus including our Old Hostel.



**Small
Indian
Civet**

The Small Indian civet is one of the 5 civets found in India.

How to identify?

Adult male is almost 3 ft long with tail 1 ft long. Greyish brown in color with streaks and lines on back. No dorsal crest as in the large Indian civet.

Habitat

They live in agricultural and secondary landscapes. They avoid dense forests and prefer long grass or bushy areas.

They have started to find refuge even in drains or roof shelters of human inhabited areas.

What do they eat?

They are nocturnal. They feed mainly on rats, mice, birds, snakes, and even fruits, roots etc.

They may even prey on poultry.



Recent photograph taken during the lockdown by IFS probationer Abhimanyu in Old Hostel.

Are they cats?

Though they are the closest cousins of the cats (Felidae) family, they belong to a different family (Viverridae).

Cat Family

Long limbs

Rounded head

Flattened muzzle

Mostly carnivorous

Many can climb but mostly do not prefer staying on trees.

Civet family

Short limbs and long body

Elongated head

Pointed Muzzle

Omnivorous

Generally live on trees but prefer coming down for hunting and foraging. They can also dig burrows.



Civet Family



Cat Family

The Civet commercial connection

The secretion of the small Indian civet is used to in the manufacture of perfume.

Coffee beans fermented within and excreted from the digestive tracts of civets in the Philippines and Indonesia are used to enhance the taste of coffee.

Care must be taken if the animal is not exploited in the process.

The SARS connection

There was a strong belief that Civets acted as a host for SARS virus. They are traded and sold in wet markets of China which was found to be major reason for SARS transmission. Unfortunately, around 10000 civets were slaughtered by China during the outbreak.

The religious connection



At the Tirupati Tirumala temple in Andhra Pradesh, temple priests anoint the idol of Lord Venkateshwara with a perfumed substance during the Friday prayers. This sacred offering is called punugu, made from the aromatic secretion of the small Indian civet

The Civet is an interesting specie, finding a relation from mystic mythologies to the commercial to religious domains. Ecologically it is a pest buster and seed disperser. Illegal trade, killing for meat and commercial exploitation has become a threat to this fascinating specie. The onus thus lies on us to remain vigilant to conserve the Civet.

Text : Manas Singh, IFS 2019

Design : Kasturi Sule, IFS 2019

Photographs : Abhimanyu, IFS 2019

Google

Reference : The book of Indian Animals. (Book by S. H. PRATHER).