

Mongoose: Brushed to death Illegal wildlife trade threatens its survival in India

Mongoose, the *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi* from Rudyard's Kipling's story and commonly known as *Nevalaa* in India is a fierce and active hunter that feeds on variety of ground-living animals, eggs and fruits. It lives in a variety of habitats and occupy rock crevices or holes, or dig burrows. The Indian Grey Mongoose in particular is well known for its ability to fight and kill venomous snakes such as the cobras.

Farmer's friend: Mongoose plays a significant role in the well-being of our ecosystem. Found in thick forest areas and in open cultivated fields, mongooses prey on rats, mice, snakes, lizards, frogs, insects and many other smaller animals. Due to its predatory diet, a mongoose is considered farmer's friend.

There are six species of mongoose found in India:

- Indian Grey Mongoose** *Herpestes edwardsii*
- Ruddy Mongoose** *Herpestes smithii* Gray
- Small Indian Mongoose** *Herpestes auro-punctatus Illiger*
- Crab-eating Mongoose** *Herpestes urva* Hodgson
- Stripe-Necked Mongoose** *Herpestes vitticollis Bennett*
- Brown Mongoose** *Herpestes fuscus* Waterhouse

Population status: Poorly known

With virtually no information available on its population status, the current level of illegal over-harvesting could be having disastrous impact on the species.

Is trade in mongoose and its derivatives legal in India? NO.

<p>Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972</p>	<p>The Indian Grey Mongoose is listed in Schedule II while all the other five species are listed in Schedule IV</p>
<p>Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).</p>	<p>Appendix III for all six species, with a zero quota for commercial trade</p>

Threat from illegal wildlife trade: Mongoose is largely threatened by the unabated illegal trade of its hair that is used to make paint brushes. Mongooses are trapped and invariably beaten to death so that their hair could be extracted for commerce. There is little knowledge among the artists or the buyers about this cruel and illegal practice, who buy and use the brushes made out of mongoose hair. The mongoose hair brushes are often sold as sable brushes or badge brushes.

It is estimated that for a kilogramme of mongoose hair atleast 50 animals have to be killed. Each mongoose yields about 40 gm of hair but when the hair is sorted, only 20 gm of hair is found usable for making paint brushes. Most of the hunting is done by regular poachers, who are hired to noose and kill these animals in the months of April and May.

Reports have indicated that thousands of mongoose are brutally killed every year to meet the demands for paint brushes from mongoose hair. Make-up artists, painters and even children in many countries are unwitting accomplices to this brutal trade practices in India. India is considered a major source of export of mongoose hair, conducted in illegal manners by law violators.

Shekhar (2003) records that the Grey Mongoose is often captured and sold as a pet. Gypsies from northern India use hook snares to capture individuals for skins, which are then sold in local markets in Nepal (Shekhar 2003). All mongoose species are in demand for the wildlife trade (Van Rompaey and Jayakumar 2003). Indian Grey Mongoose has also been used by snake charmers and *madaris* for street performances.

According to a rough estimate made by the Wildlife Trust of India in 2002, about 50,000 mongooses were killed annually by poachers. The annual yield of mongoose hair was close to 1,000 kg. Source: [1]Deccan Herald, [1] December 24, 2002

Mongoose seizures – 2007-2013 (five years)

DATE	LOCATION	NUMBER OF PAINT BRUSHES SEIZED	SOURCES
December 2007	Moradabad and Sherkote towns in Uttar Pradesh and then in Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata and Mumbai.	1000	http://mongoosehairpaintbrush.blogspot.in/
February 2009	Delhi	30,000	http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/30000-mongoose-hair-brushes-seized-2-held/articleshow/4057990.cms
June 2009	Nawamshahr, Punjab	450	http://www.tribuneindia.com/2009/20090603/jal.htm#3
May 2012	Agra, UP	Atleast 100	https://cricket.yahoo.com/news/mongoose-hair-brushes-seized-agra-080256833.html
Oct 2013	Kolkata, West Bengal	20, 000	http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Rs-10L-worth-mongoose-hair-brushes-seized-8-held/articleshow/23483391.cms

Punishment: Hunting or trade in mongoose and its parts and derivatives in India is an offence leading to imprisonment of between three and seven years and a fine of not less than INR **10000**.

Global trade: Trade sources indicate that mongoose hair is smuggled to Middle East, USA, and European countries.

Trade routes: Mongoose hair is collected from Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra. There are traders working from Ghaziabad, Meerut and Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh, Nashik and Mumbai in Maharashtra, Delhi, Chennai in Tamil Nadu and Siliguri in West Bengal among other locations. The export route includes Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Kolkata. Lately, Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bangladesh routes have also been found lucrative by smugglers.

ACT NOW! STOP MONGOOSE POACHING AND TRADE.

- Lend your voice to create awareness about the plight of the species
- Do not buy paint brushes or any products made from mongoose hair and body parts.
- If you encounter poaching or trade in mongoose, please report it to the nearest Forest Department office, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) office in New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai, Jabalpur,

INTERESTING FACTS:

1. Mongoose use solid objects to crash the shell of an egg or they throw eggs to the hard surface to break them.
http://www.softschools.com/facts/animals/mongoose_facts/45/
2. They have become immune to snake toxins and they can survive more than one snake bite in their lifetime.
http://www.softschools.com/facts/animals/mongoose_facts/45/
3. Mongoose live around 4 years in the wild and up to 20 years in captivity.
http://www.softschools.com/facts/animals/mongoose_facts/45/
4. Though they live in burrows, but the interesting thing is that they seldom dig these holes themselves; most of the time, they just move into the burrows that have been left by other animals.
<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/mongoose-facts.html>
5. The word 'mongoose' comes from the Marathi name 'mungus'.
<http://lifestyle.iloveindia.com/lounge/facts-about-mongoose-1868.html#sthash.TtHOIlux.dpuf>
6. Usually, mongooses travel in groups and never live in a place for more than a week. - See more at:
<http://lifestyle.iloveindia.com/lounge/facts-about-mongoose-1868.html#sthash.TtHOIlux.dpuf>
7. Mongooses emit a high-pitched noise, known as 'giggling', as a sign of mating.
<http://lifestyle.iloveindia.com/lounge/facts-about-mongoose-1868.html#lVpMjYzjtjxfzcKt.99>

Cochin, Guwahati and Amritsar or nearby Police stations.

- Take part in any campaigns conducted to save mongoose - support every effort to protect and conserve them.

REMEMBER: Do you have an urge to buy a paint brush or a make up brush made from mongoose hair. STOP, READ BELOW AND RETHINK

- Reports indicate that about 50 mongoose are killed to get 1 kg of its hair.
- The hair is brutally plucked and sometimes even before the animal dies.
- Mongooses are a vital part of our ecosystem. They prey on rodents, mice, snakes, lizards, frogs, insects and other smaller animals and are therefore useful for saving billions of worth of food crops annually.

How to recognize a mongoose hair/paint brush?

- Mongoose hair is stiff and therefore points steadily upwards in a brush.
- The hair has a shaded gradation of grey, brown and dark brown.
- The tips of the brush are dark brown in colour with cream or greyish centre and again dark colours near the roots.

Related Stories:

<http://indiasendangered.com/beware-your-paint-brush-might-be-made-from-mongoose-hair/>