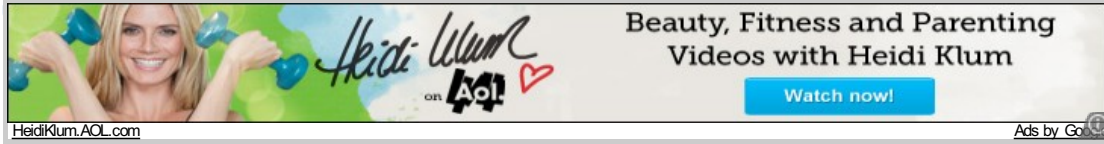


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After years, Grizzled Giant Squirrels spotted near city

Techie captured three members of the near-threatened species on camera in the forests adjoining the Cauvery river

Sridhar Vivan ★★★★★

Posted On Thursday, July 07, 2011 at 06:48:57 AM

It was a 'memorable' rediscovery for a Bangalore techie who spotted a Grizzled Giant Squirrel in the forests near Bangalore.

Though there have been reports of sightings in 2009, photographic evidence was that of only one frail looking animal. This techie not only sighted three healthy squirrels, but captured them on camera as well as in the forests adjoining the Cauvery river in Tamil Nadu, very close to Bangalore city.



The Grizzled Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa macruoura*) is not just the smallest but also the rarest of all Indian Giant Squirrels. The International Union for Conservation of Nature lists the species as near-threatened due to habitat loss and hunting. While the Grizzled Giant Squirrels are found in healthy numbers on the Karnataka side of the Cauvery, there were no records of its presence in the Tamil Nadu side comprising the Hosur forest division. Prasanna Vyanatheya, a Bangalorean, who recently formed a software firm, was passing through the forests along the Cauvery when he spotted the animals. "While passing through the forest near Uganiyam (where the Cauvery enters Tamil Nadu), I was fortunate enough to spot three Grizzled Giant Squirrels in the trees. A dozen nests were sighted in other parts of the forest on the same day," he told Bangalore Mirror.

For long, finding this endangered squirrel had become a consuming interest for wildlife enthusiasts from Kenneth Anderson Nature Society (KANS), an NGO working for the conservation of forests. They used to constantly enquire with cattle grazers and fishermen about the presence of the squirrels. Though many were told of sightings of the animal similar to their description, it was never photographed. In 2009, KANS helped Asian Nature Conservation Foundation in a bio-diversity survey of the Hosur and Dharmapuri forest divisions. A Grizzled Giant Squirrel specialist was brought in to trace the elusive animal. But only a handful of nests were discovered.

Hence, spotting of three of these animals has brought cheer to the community of whom a majority are techies from Bangalore.

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Page 1 of 34 »

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