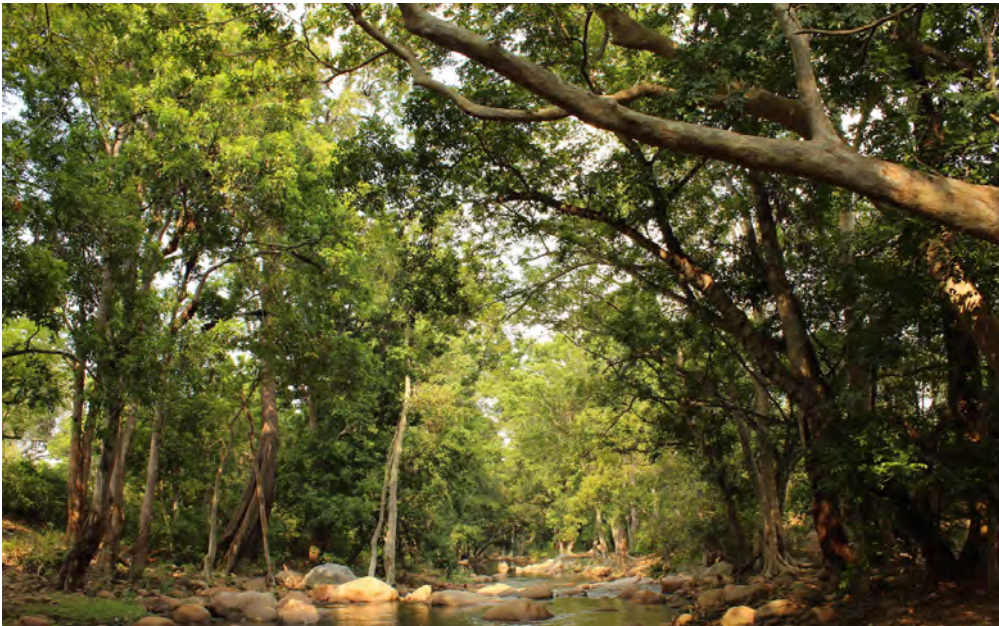




GRIZZLED GIANT SQUIRREL

A Report on the predation of Grizzled Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa macroura*) by Changeable Hawk-Eagle (*Nisaetus cirrhatus*), from Western Ghats, South India



IUCN Red List:

Global — Near
Threatened
(Joshua et al. 2008)

Riparian habitat of Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary

Mammalia
[Class of Mammals]

Rodentia
[Small gnawing
mammals]

Sciuridae
[Squirrel Family]

Ratufa macroura
[Grizzled giant squirrel]

Species described by
Pennant in 1769

The Grizzled Giant Squirrel *Ratufa macroura* is one among the three species of the giant squirrels in India (Menon 2014, Nameer 2015). The Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary, Idukki district, Kerala, India, supports the second best population of Grizzled Giant Squirrel in India. The habitat of this animal is very unique and is confined primarily to a narrow stretch of riparian vegetation along the Pambar and Chinnar rivers and their major tributaries in the Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary. Here we report an incident of predation on an adult Grizzled Giant Squirrel by a Changeable Hawk -Eagle *Nisaetus cirrhatus*.

On 24 May 2014 during our study on the ecology of Grizzled



Giant Squirrel in the Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary, southern Western Ghats, we made an interesting observation on the predation on Grizzled Giant Squirrel by Changeable Hawk-Eagle (*Nisaetus cirrhatus*). The incident was observed in the riverine patch between the Chinnar to Churulipetty stretch (10°21'13.5"N, 77°12'33.4" E, altitude of 445m) around 9.15 hrs. We first heard the alarm call of the squirrel among the canopy of the riverine vegetation, and on closer scanning of the area using binoculars (Olympus 10x50), we saw a Changeable Hawk-Eagle with prey. The eagle was spotted on a *Schleichera oleosa* tree at a height of about 16m from the ground. It was holding a Grizzled Giant Squirrel, on its talons and was feeding. Later, the remnants of the squirrel including head, skin and tail that was left out by the bird, had fallen off the tree. On examination of the skin the mammary glands could be clearly visible, thus confirming that it was a female squirrel. The morphological measurements on the skin of the Grizzled Giant Squirrel were taken and is presented in Table 1.

Global Distribution
(Joshua et al. 2008):

India & Sri Lanka



Changeable Hawk-Eagle with the prey

Table.1. Morphometric measurements of the Grizzled Giant Squirrel *Ratufa macroura* carcass obtained from Chinnar WLS

Attributes	Present study	Menon 2014 & Joshua and Johnsingh 2015
		Measurement (mm)
Head to body length	290	323 to 365
Tail length	450	361 to 423
Hind foot length	75	NA
Ear length	30	NA



Carcass of Grizzled Giant Squirrel

The Changeable Hawk-Eagle feeds on game birds, small mammals and lizards (Ali and Ripley 1983; Grimmett et al. 1998). However, according to (Naoroji 2007) the mammalian prey items of the Changeable Hawk-Eagle include, Black-naped Hare *Lepus nigricollis*, Hispid Hare *Caprolagus hispidus*, Jungle Cat *Felis chaus*, Indian Bush Rat *Golunda ellioti*, *Funambulus* sp. and Indian Flying Fox *Pteropus giganteus*.

Additionally, the following prey items have also been reported from the diet of Changeable Hawk-Eagle, such as Nilgai *Boselaphus tragocamelus*, Madras Treeshrew *Anathana ellioti*, colobine monkeys etc. (Fam & Nijman (2011), Joshi & Kasambe (2013), Sirdesai & Shad (2013), Clark et al. (2016). Naoroji (2007) had mentioned about an attempted predation of the Indian Giant Squirrel, *Ratufa indica* by Changeable Hawk-Eagle. Predation attempts on the Grizzled Giant Squirrel by the Black Eagle (*Ictinaetus malayensis*) was reported by Joshua and Johnsingh (1994).

The Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary supports the second best population of Grizzled Giant Squirrel in India



Thus the present observation on the feeding of a Grizzled Giant Squirrel, is an addition to the mammalian prey item in the diet of the Changeable Hawk-Eagle.

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