

Ecology of Indian Crested Porcupine (*Hystrix indica*) in and around Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

Western Rajasthan is the mixture of an arid and semi-arid region, which has a huge desert called 'The Great Indian Thar desert'. It is rich in biodiversity and comprises many unique endemic species. Indian crested porcupine is monogamous species, which is nocturnal and herbivore. The study area of the porcupine is unique and it is present in west part of Jodhpur city. Our study areas included 'Bhooteshwar Van Khand' (Forest area), outside west part of Jodhpur city wall lies in a semi-arid region where different behavior (burrow, feeding, breeding etc) and other activity of ICP were studied. During the study, it is found that change in behavior and activity of porcupine is mainly due to anthropological factor, which makes them survive in this conditions. Road accident and predation by dogs are the major threat to their population in this area. Detail study is needed to study the effect of food preference habit and interspecific interaction with the human.

Key words: Thar desert, Indian crested porcupine, Activity, and Behavior.

Introduction

West part of state Rajasthan includes the huge desert and definite geographical distribution in India, which is known as The Great Indian Thar Desert (GITD). GITD is extended over parts of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Haryana, ranging into Pakistan. It covers about 446,000 km², of which 208,110 km² lies in India and rest in Pakistan (Idris *et al.*, 2009). The Jodhpur city is located at eastern peripheral of GITD (latitude 26°18'N and longitude 73°08'E) and is a semi-arid region (Lal *et al.*, 2016). Habitat in and around Jodhpur has comprised the mixture of different topography which includes sandy scrubbed, rocky scrubbed, agricultural land, wetlands, etc.

Indian crested porcupine (*Hystrix indica*) (ICP) is monogamous species with distinguished features like having long modified hairs called as 'spines' or 'quills'. On tail, quills are white and large called as 'rattling quills' which has gained utmost development in this species. ICP when threatened, alarmed, or irritated, it erects its spines and rattles their hollow tails quills (Fig. 4). Its body length ranges around 30-35 inches, weighing 12-20 kg and spines length around 6-8 inches. ICP is nocturnal, generalist species, burrow-dwelling rodents. ICP favors rocky or hilly areas and adapted to survive in any climatic conditions. Burrows is not obligatory to shelter, they lie up in thick scrub near cultivation and in the Terai, they commonly shelter in the tall grass in the crop season. (Prater, 2014; Synder *et al.*, 1997). ICP has prevalent distribution and often considered a pest by farmers and gardeners in the west part of Rajasthan. ICP is significant to an ecosystem as it disperses vegetative propagules of plants (geophytes) (Gutterman and Herr, 1981; Gutterman, 1982).

Material and Methods

Study area

Our study areas included 'Bhooteshwar Van Khand' (Forest area), outside west part of Jodhpur city wall lies in the semi-arid region where study on behavior and different activity of ICP were carried out. Other sites include different parts/areas in and around Jodhpur city for distribution only.

The changes in behaviour and activity of Indian Crested Porcupine is mainly due to anthropological factor.

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