

Life & Habitat

LION-TAILED MACAQUE



KEYSTONE FOUNDATION



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Cover Photo: Lion-Tailed Macaque from Nilambur forest, taken by Ajesh M



Photo: Ajesh M

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Primates of Kerala



Photo: Timothy A. Gonsalves

Black-footed Gray Langur



Photo: Ajesh M

Bonnet Macaque



Photo: Mithun

Lion-Tailed Macaque



Photo: TR Shankar Raman

Nilgiri Langur



Photo: Aparajita Datta

Tufted Gray Langur



Photo: Dr. K.A.I.Nekaris

Grey Slender Loris

What do LTMs look like?



Photo: Rison Thumboor



Photo: Ajesh M



Photo: Kalyan Varma

- Small sized monkey; weighing up to 15 kg.
- Body covered with black hair.
- Furless black face surrounded by silver-white long hair like a mane.
- Babies are born with light faces and no mane.
- They are named for their Lion-like tail.
- Tail is long, thick, and naked, with a Lion-like black tuft at the tip.
- Males have long and sharp canines.
- Display threat to rival males. Also, helpful when feeding on fruits like jackfruits and Cullenia.



Photo: Mithun



Photo: Rison Thumboor



Photo: T R Shankar Raman

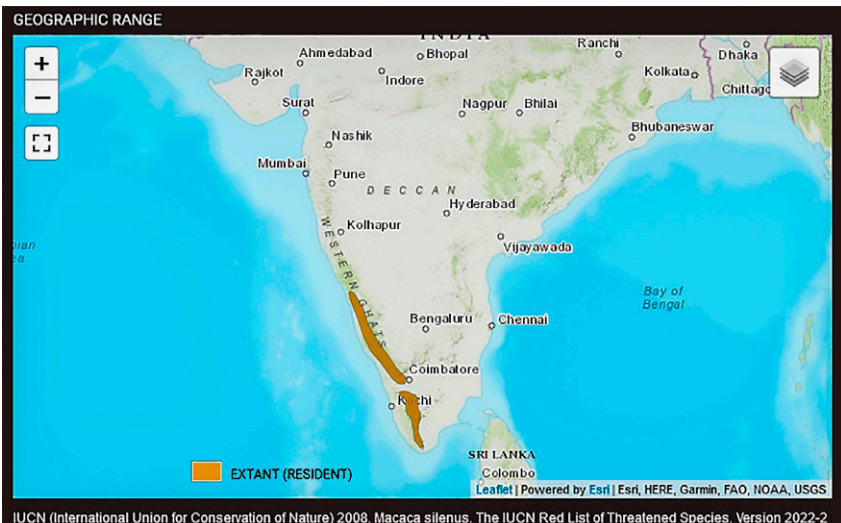
Distinguished from similar looking Nilgiri Langur by its short and tufted tail.

Where do they live?



Photo: T.R Shankar Raman

- Endemic to Western Ghats and restricted to Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu.
- Despite wide distribution range, their area of occupancy is small & fragmented.
- Confined to higher elevations due to the destruction of low land wet evergreen forests in Kerala.
- They are arboreal in nature, spending most of their lives in upper canopy of tropical evergreen rainforests & monsoon forests.



Distribution



Photo: Uday Kiran

Their distribution is influenced by fruit tree mainly *Cullenia exarillata* and *Ficus* species.



Photo: Vijay Sundararaman Iyer

LTM's are found in a wide range of elevation, from 100-1800 m.

What do they eat?



Photo: TR Shankar Raman



Photo: TR Shankar Raman



Photo: Rajeshodiyanchal



- Omnivores.
- Feed on fruits, seeds, flowers, insects, eggs, hatchlings, snails and small vertebrates.
- 60% of their diet consists of fruits.
- They use 218 species of plants in Western Ghats as food resource.
- LTMs usually spend half of the day feeding and the other half in search of food.



Photo: TR Shankar Raman

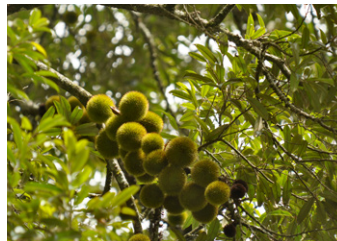


Photo: TR Shankar Raman

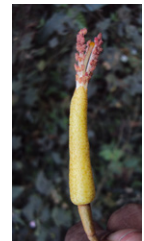


Photo: Vrnajaraj

Cullenia is a keystone species, its flowers and fruits serve as food for many of the species including the LTM.

What are their groups like?



Photo: Ajesh M

- Territorial animals.
- Live in groups of usually 8-40 members.
- Group contains multiple females & only 1-4 males.
- One male is dominant and protects the group from other troops.
- Males leave the group after they reach maturity around 5-7 years old.
- They then join the male-only group and visit other groups looking for an opportunity to overthrow the existing alpha male of that group.
- Females in a group stay with the same group and never leave.



Photo: Uday Kiran

Adult members of the troop interact relatively infrequently, but sometimes pairs or triads may be observed grooming one another.



Photo: Ajesh M

- Sometimes rival groups fight with one another for good fruiting trees.
- It's usually the alpha male that engages in these fights, though other monkeys do join at times.

How do they reproduce



Photo: Ajesh M

- Polygynous mating system where one male mates with many females.
- Do not have a specific breeding season however females give birth only once in three years.
- Reproduction cycles of these macaques are very slow.
- Female LTM has a lifespan of 18-20 years and Females give first birth at an age of six and a half years.
- Gestation lasts about 6 months & young are nursed for one year.

Why are they important?

- Lion-tailed Macaques play a crucial role in seed dispersal in a forest.
- They transport seeds to long distances by dropping or defecating.
- They sometimes carry fruits in their cheek pouches & consume them at long distances from where they were gathered, helping many plants to spread & propagate in the forest.
- Important link in the food chain

Forest Degradation



Photo: Saurabhsawant

Locally extinct from Goa & Maharashtra during 1950s by intense deforestation of wet evergreen forests.

What threats are they facing?

- Endangered' in the IUCN Red List.
- Only about 4000 individuals in the wild.

Habitat fragmentation

- Habitat fragmentation –(due to large amounts of timber harvesting and exotic plantations, such as tea and coffee, spread of agriculture, construction of water reservoirs for irrigation and power generation, human settlements).
- They do not live, feed or travel through plantations.
- Private ownership of land poses its own threats as well; it is unregulated by the forest department, so owners can change land use patterns and clear undergrowth for monocrop plantations, resulting in the loss of resources crucial for the survival of the LTM.

Road kill of lion-tailed macaque

A lot of roads go through these forests breaking them into isolated fragments. These primates which very rarely step on the ground in undisturbed forests, are now forced to come down to cross these broken canopies leading to road kills. About 25% of the Lion-tailed Macaques are found in small isolated forest fragments.



Photo: P Jeganathan



Photo: P Jeganathan

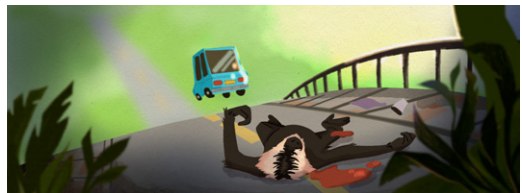


Illustration: Malavika Sajiv

- Loss of habitat – increased interaction with humans.
- Hunting, electrocution.
- Susceptible to inbreeding.

What happens when we feed wildlife

Feeding wildlife is not a recommended practice. Despite good intentions, offering food to wild animals can have unintended consequences. It can cause the animal to approach roads in search of more food, putting them at risk of getting hit by vehicles. Additionally, feeding can lead to animals approaching shops and houses in search of food, resulting in aggressive behavior. Changing their natural diet can also make them sick and even lead to death. Please do not feed the animals.

What we can do?

- Do not feed LTMs or any wild animal.
- Feeding human-provided food has resulted in drastic shifts in their diet and behaviour, which may be detrimental to the long-term survival of the species.
- Food offerings made to monkeys encourage them to descend onto roads where vehicular traffic poses a major threat to their survival.

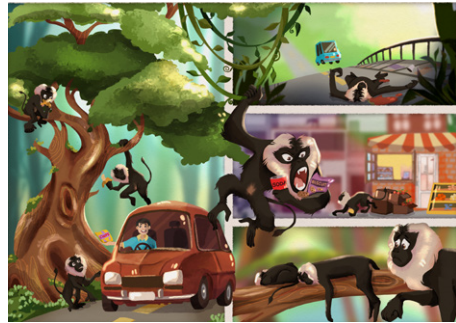


Illustration: Malavika Sajiv



Icon of the successful environmental movement that happened in Kerala- the 'save silent valley movement' (1973-1985).





Photo: Ajesh M