

Night Life



Malabar Spiny Dormouse

The Malabar spiny dormouse *Platacanthomys lasiurus* is a muroid rodent that is endemic to the Western Ghats of India. A rarely seen species, the Malabar spiny dormouse is rather unique, for not only is it the only extant species in the genus *Platacanthomys*, it is also the only representative of the rodent family Muscardinidae in India. Nocturnal and arboreal, little information is available about the ecology and behaviour of the species. Primarily frugivorous, the species feeds on the fruits, seeds, and flowers of tree species such as *Terminalia bellerica* (Baheda), *Persea macrantha* (Uramavu), *Tamarindus indica* (Tamarind) and *Melia dubia* (Malabar neem). It is also known to feed on commercial crops like *Anacardium occidentale* (cashew), *Piper nigrum* (pepper) and *Theobroma cacao* (cacao), and for this reason is considered a pest in some areas. People who own plantations of these crops near forest areas are known to protect their crops through poisoning the species and reducing the access of the species to their crops by ensuring there is no canopy contiguity. Apart from these retaliatory measure, the long-term survival of the species is also threatened by poaching for folk medicine and fragmentation of forest habitats.

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