



# Indian Flying Fox Bat: *Pteropus giganteus*

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## Why in News?

In a recent study, conducted by scientists from the **Centre for Ecological Sciences in the Indian Institute of Science and the Wildlife Institute of India**, the nectar and fruit-eating flying fox (*Pteropus giganteus*), India's largest bat species, has taken on a new dimension of interest.

- Beyond its nocturnal activities, these flying foxes have been found to spend a notable portion of their **day-roosting time engaged in environmental vigilance**.

## What are the Key Highlights of the Study?

- The study unveiled that *Pteropus giganteus* practices **vigilant behaviour during daylight roosting**, dedicating about **7% of their resting time to watch for dangers, contrary to their nocturnal nature**.
- The study distinguished between **social vigilance (observing nearby individuals for conflicts)** and **environmental vigilance (watching for signs of danger in the surroundings)**.
- The study observed that **vigilance levels varied based on the spatial positioning of the bats within roosting trees**, confirming the edge effect hypothesis.
- These bats, acting as a keystone species known for their **nectar and fruit-eating habits**, contribute significantly to **pollination and seed dispersal**, thereby playing a vital role in maintaining ecosystem health and biodiversity.
  - A keystone species is one that has a **disproportionately large effect on its natural environment relative to its abundance**, impacting many other organisms in an ecosystem and helping to determine the types and numbers of other species in an ecological community.
- The findings emphasize the urgency of protecting *Pteropus giganteus* and its habitat to ensure the preservation of its ecological role and the overall balance of the ecosystem.

## What are the Key Points About *Pteropus giganteus*?

- **About:**
  - *Pteropus giganteus*, commonly known as the **Indian flying fox**, is a remarkable bat species native to the Indian subcontinent.
- **Appearance:**
  - *Pteropus giganteus* is characterized by its **large size and fox-like facial features**.
  - Usually displays a **dark brown, gray, or black body, often with a distinct yellowish mantle (typical of Pteropus genus)**.
  - Males are generally larger than females.
- **Geographic Range:**
  - *Pteropus giganteus* occurs in tropical regions of **South Central Asia, from Pakistan to China, and as far south as the Maldive Islands**.
- **Habitat:**
  - These animals can be found in **forests and swamps**. Large groups of individuals roost in

trees such as banyan, fig, and tamarind. Roosting trees are usually in the vicinity of a body of water..

▪ **Conservation Status:**

- [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\): Appendix II](#)
- [Wildlife \(Protection\) Act, 1972: Schedule II](#)

▪ **Negative Impact:**

- Indian flying foxes considered as vermin cause extensive damage to fruit orchards, and are therefore considered pests in many regions. They may also be responsible for spreading disease, particularly the **Nipah virus, which causes illness and death in humans.**



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