

FEEDING ECOLOGY OF INDIAN PORCUPINE (*HYSTRIX INDICA* KERR)
IN COCONUT (*COCOS NUCIFERA* L.) PLANTATIONS
OF THE WESTERN GHATS OF KARNATAKA¹

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Feeding ecology of the Indian Porcupine *Hystrix indica* Kerr in and around coconut plantations in the Western Ghats of Karnataka, southern India, was studied during 2001-2002. A survey of four districts in the study area showed that this species fed on 16 species of plants and was a major pest to the coconut plantations. It debarked the palm, fed on fallen nuts, injured seedlings to the point of no further growth, and bored into the bole eventually causing mortality. Mortality of the palms depended on age – the younger the palm, the greater the damage ($r=0.9206$, $P=0.05$).

The Porcupines feed on coconut bark, principally, from September to January. Burrows were categorized as small and big, and the number of Porcupines corresponded to the size of the burrows ($r=0.8972$, $P=0.05$). Encroachment of forest lands by man has resulted in alternative foods of the Indian Porcupine becoming locally scarce in the wild. Hence, conserving its natural habitat is critical.

Key words: Indian Porcupine, damage, coconut plantations, Western Ghats, southern India