



# PRAKRITI

Quest for nature



Officers' Club, CASFOS, Dehradun





Central Academy for State Forest Service  
Dehradun

# FLORA OF THE WEEK

## *Kigelia africana*

Sausage tree (Balam kheera)

*Kigelia* is flowering tree known as cucumber or sausage tree because of its big fruits (average 0.6 m in length and 4 kg in weight) that has shape of cucumbers. These fruits hangs from long fibrous stalks. It has big maroon, red flowers with yellowish outside color. It is also grown all over India and found abundantly in West Bengal. It can be seen as an ornamental and roadside tree in Delhi, West Bengal and Southern India. In Hindi its common name is Balam Kheera (Kheera is cucumber in Hindi) and Jhar Phanus.

|          |                 |
|----------|-----------------|
| Kingdom: | Plantae         |
| Clade:   | Asterids        |
| Order:   | Lamiales        |
| Family:  | Bignoniaceae    |
| Genus:   | <i>Kigelia</i>  |
| Species: | <i>africana</i> |



### Morphology:

Description : A tree growing up to 20 m tall with grey bark which is smooth at first but peeling on older trees; wood is pale brown or yellowish, undifferentiated and not prone to cracking; fruits are huge and cylindrical in shape up to 0.6 m in length and 4 kg in weight. Flowering time in spring; Ancillary panicles up to 2 m long; Fused petal corolla; Flowers irregularly bell shaped, 9-13 cm long two lipped, yellowish on outside and purple on inside; Fruits oblong, hard 30-50 cm long, hanging on stalk for several month.

### Ecology:

*Kigelia africana* occurs along watercourses, in riverine fringes, alluvial and open woodland, high-rainfall savanna, shrubland, and in rain forest. It occurs on loamy red clay soils, sometimes rocky, damp or peaty, from sea level up to 3000 m altitude.



### Medicinal uses:

Sausage tree or *Kigelia* is one of the most valuable tree, which all parts has medicinal properties and used to treat many diseases. Learn how to use this to treat digestive disorders.

In traditional medicine the various parts of the tree are used for medicinal purpose. *Kigelia* is used in the treatment of the kidney stones, skin diseases, dysentery, parasitic infestation, post-partum bleeding, diabetes, pneumonia, toothache, rheumatism, CNS depression, worm infestation, genital infections, etc.

Fruit used for skin diseases, microbial infections, hepatic diseases boils, psoriasis, eczema, leprosy, syphilis, cancer, ulcers, dysentery, post-partum haemorrhage, malaria, diabetes, pneumonia, constipation and general pains; dried powdered fruit used to increase the flow of milk in lactating women; baked fruits used to ferment beer and boiled ones yield a red dye; root is employed as a vermifuge and aid in the treatment of rheumatism and haemorrhoids.



### Distribution-

Native to Africa; cultivated in various other tropical countries; as an ornamental tree in Australia, USA and many parts of Southeast Asia.



# FAUNA OF THE WEEK

## *Viverricula indica*

### (Small Indian Civet)



Central Academy for State Forest Service  
Dehradun

The Small Indian Civet is a species of Civet native to South and South East Asia. It has coarse brownish grey to pale yellowish-brown fur, with several longitudinal black or brown bands on the back and longitudinal rows of spots on the sides. There are also two dark stripes from behind the ear to the shoulders. The head is grey or brownish-grey. The ears are short and rounded with a dusky mark behind each ear, and one in front of each eye. The feet are brown or black. Its tail has alternating black and whitish rings, 7 to 9 of each colour.

**Population Size:**

**Unknown**

**Life span:**

**8-9 years**

**Weight:**

**2-4 kg**

**Length:**

**53-58 cm.**



Source:  
Internet

WPA, 1972: Schedule I IUCN Status: Least Concern

|         |                    |
|---------|--------------------|
| Kingdom | Animalia           |
| Phylum  | Chordata           |
| Class   | Mammalia           |
| Order   | Carnivora          |
| Family  | Viverridae         |
| Genus   | <i>Viverricula</i> |
| Species | <i>indica</i>      |

#### Fun Facts:

- ❖ Civets produce a musk (which is also called Civet musk), being highly valued as stabilizing agent and fragrance for perfume.
- ❖ Civets have 40 teeth and 5 digits on each of their paw with non-retractable claws.
- ❖ Civets like Palm flower sap. When fermented this become toddy or sweet liquor.
- ❖ In Ahmadabad Zoo these are kept for the purpose of collecting glandular secretions.



**Habitat and Distribution:** Small Indian Civet occur in most of India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, South and central China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Peninsular Malaysia and Nepal. These animals live in wide range of habitats, including grasslands and savannah, riverine areas and near a tea plantation, marshes, thorn and bamboo forests scrubby areas and near villages.

**Ecology and Behaviour:** Small Indian civets are nocturnal and mostly terrestrial animals. Their homes are holes in the ground, under rocks or in thick bush. They can dig their own burrows, but also occupied abandoned burrows of other species. In sub urban habitats they use gutters or other hollow, dark spaces as makeshift burrows. Occasionally pairs are seen during mating season and hunting their food. In areas not disturbed by humans, these Civets may sometimes hunt during the day. They spent most of the time on the ground but they also climb well. As they are solitary creatures the main way to communicate with each other is scent marking which also warns the others of territory boundaries.

Small Indian Civets are Carnivorous animals that feed mainly on Rats, mice, Birds, Snakes etc. They may also eat fruits and roots. Some individuals are spotted while carry of poultry.

The breeding season can occur throughout the year. Females usually give births 2 to 5 pups which are weaned at 4 to 4.5 months after birth.

**Population Threats:** Hunting and Trapping, Poaching and Accidental death.





Central Academy for State Forest Service  
Dehradun

# BIRD OF THE WEEK

## *Amaurornis phoenicurus*

### (White-breasted waterhen)

#### White-breasted water-hen:

Adult white-breasted water-hens have mainly dark grey upperparts and flanks, and a white face, neck and breast. The lower belly and undertail are cinnamon coloured. The body is flattened laterally to allow easier passage through the reeds or undergrowth. They have long toes, a short tail and a yellow bill and legs.

**Reproductive behaviour:** - The nesting season is mainly June to October but varies locally. They nest in a dry location on the ground in marsh vegetation, laying 6-7 eggs. The eggs can be identified by their brownish-white shells with reddish-brown spots. Courtship involves bowing, billing and nibbling. The eggs hatch in about 19 days. Both sexes incubate the eggs and take care of the chicks. Chicks often dive underwater to escape predation.



**Fun Facts:-**The most important criterion for the selection of the site of both egg nest and brood nest of this bird is the proximity to the water bodies.

Water is essential for breeding and rearing of the chicks. White-breasted Waterhens are often seen out in the open.

They are noisy birds, especially at dawn and dusk, with a loud *ruak ruak* call.

WPA, 1972: Schedule IV IUCN Status: Least concern

|         |                    |
|---------|--------------------|
| Kingdom | Animalia           |
| Phylum  | Chordata           |
| Class   | Aves               |
| Order   | Gruiformes         |
| Family  | Rallidae           |
| Genus   | <i>Amaurornis</i>  |
| Species | <i>phoenicurus</i> |



#### Threats and conservation status:

Loss of wetland habitats was responsible for its decline and if it continues at current level, were clearing of the wild vegetation, filling of water bodies, change in land use pattern and construction activities. It is feared that this bird may become a threatened species in immediate future.

**Behavior and Ecology:** These birds are usually seen singly or in pairs as they forage slowly along the edge of a water body mainly on the ground but sometimes clambering up low vegetation. The tail is held up and jerked as they walk. They probe with their bill in mud or shallow water, also picking up food by sight. They mainly eat insects, small fish, aquatic invertebrates and grains or seeds etc they can be noisy especially at dawn and dusk, with loud croaky calls. Vigorous calls and fights occur among both the male and female birds in the morning and evening during the breeding season and this eventually leads to pair formation. Once the pairs have formed, there is a long courtship period which includes bowing, billing and nibbling displays. Finally, the male mounts the female at the end of the courtship period.

#### Distribution and migration:

A. phoenicurus :-

These are widely distributed across the marshes area across tropical Asia from Pakistan east to Indonesia. They are mainly seen in the plains but have been known from the higher hills such as in Nainital (1300m) and the High Range (1500m) in Kerala.

