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The Indian Flying Fox and the WPA 1972 Schedules

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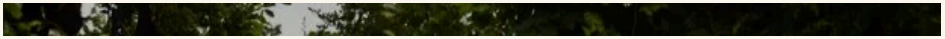
The Indian Flying Fox and the WPA 1972 Schedules

India’s largest bat was once officially treated as a pest. **Nobody ever proved it feeds on blood, because it doesn’t.**





The Indian Flying Fox, Pteropus giganteus, at Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary, Karnataka. Photo: PJeganathan, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

At a Glance

Four facts to hold on to.

01
Fruit, not blood

It is a frugivore. Vampire bats are not found in India.

02
Once “vermin”

Old Schedule V of the 1972 Act.

03
Schedule II today

After the 2022 amendment cut six schedules to four.

04
2026 heat deaths

Nearly 700 died in Chhattisgarh.

Frugivore An animal that eats mainly fruit.
Vermin A legal label for animals treated as pests.
Schedule A list attached to an Act that decides which rules apply to a species.
CITES The treaty that controls international trade in endangered species.

Diet, and Legal Status From Vermin to Schedule II

Must Know

Diet: fruit, not blood

- The Indian Flying Fox (*Pteropus giganteus*) is a **frugivore**. It feeds on fruit, nectar, and flowers, not blood.
- A common exam trap confuses it with vampire bats. Vampire bats feed on blood. They are native to the Americas and do not occur in India.
- It is one of the largest bats in the world, and India's largest. It roosts in large colonies on tall trees.

Old vermin status

- Under the original Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, it was placed at one point under the **vermin category**. That was old Schedule V.
- The reason was crop and orchard damage. Large roosting colonies can strip fruit trees.

> **Quick check 1.** The Indian Flying Fox is a frugivore that feeds on fruit, nectar, and flowers, not blood. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

The 2022 Schedule Reform, and Schedule I

Good to Know

The 2022 schedule reform

- The Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022 cut the schedules from **six to four**. It took effect on 1 April 2023.

- The separate vermin schedule was removed. Section 62 still allows a temporary, area-specific vermin notice for a Schedule II animal.
- The Indian Flying Fox is now in **Schedule II**. That gives it real legal protection instead of vermin status.
- For the wider rule, see how the Wild Life (Protection) Act protects listed species inside and outside reserves.

Current list	What it contains	Main legal result
Schedule I	Animals in the highest protection tier, such as the tiger and gharial.	Hunting is barred, apart from narrow exceptions. Penalties are stricter.
Schedule II	Other protected animals, including the Indian Flying Fox.	Hunting is also barred, apart from legal exceptions.
Schedule III	Specified wild plants, such as listed orchids and pitcher plants.	Picking, uprooting, possession, cultivation, and trade are restricted.
Schedule IV	Specimens of species in the three CITES appendices.	CITES rules apply to trade and possession. Permits may be needed.

- Schedules I and II set domestic animal protection. Schedule IV mainly handles CITES-linked trade controls. A species can appear in both. Schedule IV includes *Pteropus* fruit bats under CITES Appendix II.
- Before April 2023, old Schedule V listed vermin and old Schedule VI listed specified plants.
- **Vermin trap:** old Schedule V no longer exists. Yet Section 62 lets the Central Government notify a Schedule II animal as vermin. The notice must state an area and a period. It does not cover every flying fox in India.

- Legal sources: the current Act and schedules on India Code, and the commencement notice from the Press Information Bureau. Law checked on 24 September 2026.

Schedule I: the highest-protection tier

- Schedule I gives the highest level of protection. Hunting is banned except under very narrow legal exceptions.
- Any Schedule I species gets the same protection, from the tiger to a protected tortoise.
- Schedule I does not mean a species is nearly extinct. It does not mean it is endemic to one region either. Those are separate facts.
- The gharial, the Indian wild ass, and the wild buffalo are all Schedule I species.

> **Quick check 2.** The Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022 abolished the old vermin category (Schedule V) and cut the schedules from six to four. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Exam Edge

Previous Year Questions

The Act has been tested several times.

> **Quick check 3.** A Schedule I tortoise gets the same level of legal protection as the tiger, since both sit in the Act's highest-protection tier. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

> **Quick check 4.** Schedule I protection implies that a species is nearly extinct or endemic to one region. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Current Affairs

Current Affairs

A heatwave die-off (2026)

- In late May 2026, nearly 200 Indian Flying Foxes were found dead in Chhattisgarh's Korba district. Another 500 died in Kanker district in the same heatwave.
- Korba recorded 42-44°C. Researchers say the bats tolerate heat up to about 40°C. At 42°C survival reaches a real tipping point.
- A species once labelled "vermin" now faces a newer threat: heat stress, not hunting.
- Bats spread seeds and pollinate fruit trees. Repeated die-offs threaten the wider forest ecosystem, not just the species.

- Source: The Print.

Think it through: why does the die-off matter beyond the bats themselves?

Flying foxes spread seeds and pollinate fruit trees as they feed. They are part of how the forest regrows. Nearly 700 died in May 2026 alone. That loss also removes their seed-spreading and pollination work. Repeated heatwaves at that intensity could cause more die-offs. That makes it a recurring threat, even though the species is now legally protected under Schedule II.

Quick check 5. Indian Flying Foxes tolerate heat only up to about 40°C, and 42°C marks a real tipping point for survival. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick check 6. Nearly 700 Indian Flying Foxes died across Korba and Kanker districts combined during the May 2026 heatwave. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick Q&A

What does the Indian Flying Fox eat?

Fruit, nectar, and flowers.

Which old schedule held “vermin”?

Schedule V.

How many schedules after 2022?

Four.

Where is the flying fox listed now?

Schedule II.

What threatened it in 2026?

A heatwave.

Practice: Indian Flying Fox and WPA Schedules

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Practice MCQs

1. What does the Indian Flying Fox actually feed on?

A. Fish

B. Blood of other animals

C. Fruit, nectar, and flowers

D. Small rodents

See answer ↓

2. The Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022 reduced the number of schedules in the original 1972 Act from six to how many?

A. Five

B. Two

C. Four

D. Three

See answer ↓

3. Under the pre-2022 Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, which schedule listed species classified as "vermin"?

A. Schedule III

B. Schedule V

C. Schedule VI

D. Schedule I

See answer ↓

4. Where is the Indian Flying Fox currently listed under the post-2022 Wild Life (Protection) Act schedules?

A. Schedule IV

B. Schedule I

C. Schedule II

D. Schedule III

See answer ↓

5. Consider the following statements: Statement-I: The Indian Flying Fox is placed under the "vermin" category in the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. Statement-II: The Indian Flying Fox feeds on the blood of other animals.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements? (UPSC CSP 2024)

A. Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II explains Statement-I

B. Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct, but Statement-II does not explain Statement-I

C. Statement-I is correct, but Statement-II is incorrect

D. Statement-I is incorrect, but Statement-II is correct

See answer ↓

6. According to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, which of the following animals cannot be hunted by any person except under some provisions provided by law?

1. Gharial

2. Indian wild ass

3. Wild buffalo

A. 1 and 3 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1, 2 and 3

D. 1 only

See answer ↓

7. In India, if a species of tortoise is declared protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, what does it imply?

A. Both of these: it no longer exists in the wild, and it is endemic to one region.

B. It no longer exists in the wild, a few individuals are under captive protection, and it is impossible to prevent its extinction.

C. It enjoys the same level of protection as the tiger.

D. It is endemic to a particular region of India.

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **C.** The Indian Flying Fox is a frugivore, feeding on fruit, nectar, and flowers. Blood-feeding is a trait of vampire bats, which do not occur in India.

   ↑ Q1

2. **C.** The 2022 amendment reduced the number of schedules from six to four, and abolished Schedule V, the old vermin category.

   ↑ Q2

3. **B.** Schedule V of the original 1972 Act listed species classified as vermin, including the Indian Flying Fox at one point. This schedule was abolished by the 2022 amendment.

   ↑ Q3

4. **C.** The Indian Flying Fox is currently listed under Schedule II of the amended Act, giving it a real degree of legal protection instead of vermin status.

   ↑ Q4

5. **C.** The Indian Flying Fox was once placed under the vermin category. It is a frugivore, feeding on fruit, nectar, and flowers, not blood -- blood-feeding is a vampire-bat trait, and vampire bats do not occur in India.

   ↑ Q5

6. **C.** All three (gharial, Indian wild ass, wild buffalo) are Schedule I species under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and cannot be hunted except under narrow legal exceptions. ↑ Q6

7. **C.** Schedule I gives the highest, absolute level of protection under the Act. The tiger is the classic Schedule I example, so any Schedule I species gets that same protection tier — it doesn't imply near-extinction or endemism. ↑ Q7

Quick-check answers

1. **True.** ↑ 1
2. **True.** ↑ 2

3. **True.** ↑ 3

4. **False.** ↑ 4

5. **True.** ↑ 5

6. **True.** ↑ 6

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