Animal Guide - UAI Campus

Introduction

This animal guide has been put together based on my observations during the months of August, September, and October - the heart of the rainy season here in Karjat. These months bring dramatic changes to the landscape: heavy rainfall, high humidity, and fewer hours of direct sunlight. As a result, the flora and fauna you see during this time differ noticeably from what appears in the dry season. Still, I hope that this guide offers the curious student or faculty member some insight into the remarkable diversity of life that quietly exists on the campus of Universal AI University.

Each entry follows a consistent structure: it begins with the name of the animal in English and Latin, followed by one or two photographs and a few interesting facts - usually including where on campus the animal can be observed. The idea is not to present a complete biological profile that might only appeal to a handful of specialists, but rather to offer something more approachable - something that helps you quickly identify a species you've seen, and perhaps learn a few details that feel worth knowing, even if you've never considered yourself particularly drawn to nature.

More than anything, I hope this guide awakens a sense of curiosity. Even if you're studying business or technology and feel far removed from biology or environmental science, there is value - and even joy - in noticing the life around you. In writing this, I don't claim to have captured all the species worth mentioning. Far from it. My hope is that this guide encourages others - students, faculty, or visitors - to pay closer attention to their surroundings, to grow in appreciation for life beyond our own species, and ideally even to add species to this guide that I've missed.

It's worth mentioning that the ongoing expansion of this university - through new buildings, roads, and an increasing amount of people - will likely come at a cost: a gradual decline in the presence and variety of wildlife on campus. This is less of a critique, but rather an observation. It's something happening across the world - wherever humans reshape the land to meet their needs, often unfortunately with little thought for the creatures who once called it home.

I invite you, now and in the years to come, to compare what's documented here with what still lives around you. Some of the animals in this guide may eventually vanish from this campus - not because they weren't suited to the environment, but because the environment changed too much, too fast. By noticing and remembering them, perhaps we can learn to tread a little more carefully - or at least, to appreciate what was here before it's gone.

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Amphibians

Common Indian Tree Frog (Polypedates Maculatus)

- Nocturnal, feeds on insects
- Well adapted to urban & human environments
- Coloration is highly variable, ranging from shades of brown, gray, and yellow to green
- Large toe pads at the ends of their digits are adapted for climbing vertical surfaces
- Rather small in size, usually 3,5 - 6cm in body length

Indian Bullfrog (Hoplobatrachus Tigerinus)

- Although a common sight on campus, large individuals are much rarer, but can occasionally be seen near bodies of standing or flowing water
- Males' skin color turns bright yellow during mating season
- Largest frog in India, sometimes reaching lengths of up to 20cm
- Diet consists of insects, mice, small birds, snakes and other frogs
- Feeds on mosquito larvae, thus playing a beneficial role in controlling their population, thus preventing the spread of diseases
- Threatened by poaching due to the demand for their legs, which are considered a delicacy
- Considered an invasive species in some regions, such as the Andaman islands, where their presence can devastate native frog populations
- Can reach 7 years of age

Birds

Common Kingfisher (Alcedo Atthis)

- Beautiful bird, can occasionally be spotted sitting on branches by the pond on campus
- Small in size
- Characteristic very fast & straight flight low above water surface
- Known for its high, shrill whistled call
- Its aerodynamic shape inspired the design of japanese bullet trains
- Found in most parts of the world

Common Myna (Acridotheres Tristis)

- Quite intelligent, known for their problem-solving skills & ability to mimic human speech
- Very adaptable to different habitats
- One of three birds listed among "100 most invasive species"
- Omnivores with diverse diet consisting of insects, fruits, seeds, snails, worms, and even eggs
- Are believed to be monogamous and may pair for life

Common Tailorbird (Orthotomus Sutorius)

- Named for unique ability to build nests by "sewing" leaves together with plant fibers, grasses, or insect silk to form a cup-like structure for the eggs
- Can often be seen flying across the campus, carrying long blades of grass
- Feeds mostly on insects and occasionally fruits & berries
- Found in gardens, parks and open woodlands

Eastern Great Egret (Ardea Modesta)

- Hunt by patiently standing in shallow water and swiftly stabbing prey with their long bills
- Diet includes fish, amphibians, crustaceans, insects, small reptiles, and occasionally small birds and mammals
- Nearly extinct in late 1800s due to hunting for their feathers
- During breeding, the bill becomes black, facial skin turns green, and long, hair-like feathers (nuptial plumes) grow on the lower back
- Large wading birds, with lengths of approximately 85-100 cm and a wingspan of about 1.5 meters
- Some individuals found almost every evening among the noisy group of medium & small egrets on the golden bamboo plants by the parking lot near the entrance
- Occasionally stalking on grassy areas & by the pond on campus hunting frogs & lizards, especially in the morning
- Suffers from wetland degradation due to agricultural development, as well as the impacts of climate change and pollution

Greater Coucal / Crow Pheasant (Centropus Sinensis)



- A large cuckoo and actually neither crow nor pheasant
- Unlike most cuckoos, it is non-parasitic and raises its own young, rather than laying eggs in other birds' nests
- Omnivore: feeds on insects, lizards, small mammals, fruits, and seeds
- Clumsy flier, thus often preferring to walk in search of food
- Distinct, deep "coop-coop-coop" call, heard over long distances

Greenish Warbler (Phylloscopus Trochiloides)


- Classic example of a phenomena known as "ring species": Species evolved as they slowly spread around the Tibetan Plateau. When they eventually met on the other side, the populations had diverged so much that they could no longer interbreed & thus each became a different species
- Migratory species, travelling from its breeding grounds in Europe or the Himalayas to the subcontinent where they spend the winter
- Small, shy & thus often hard to spot

Grey-Breasted Prinia (Prinia Hodgsonii)


- Insectivorous, found on the subcontintent & South-East Asia
- Plumage varies in shades of white, grey and brown depending on breeding or non-breeding season
- Prefers open woodlands scrub jungles and bushlands

House Sparrow (Passer Domesticus)


- Most widely distributed wild bird in the world, found on every continent except Antarctica & highly adaptable, especially to urban environment
- Intelligent & known to open automatic doors to access food inside of buldings
- Highly social & found in flocks of 5-15 individuals, often quite noisy
- Commenly seen "dust bathing" on sunny days by throwing dust or sand over their feathers to clean themselves

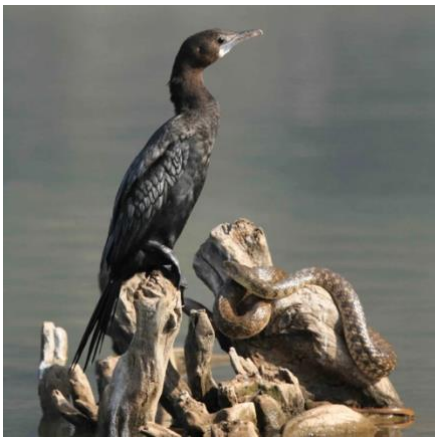
Indian Pond Heron (Ardeola Grayii)

- Occasionally seen patiently hunting by the pond on campus
- Excellent camouflage making it hard to spot until it takes flight, revealing its bright white wings
- In Sri Lanka, known as the *kana koka*, or "half-blind heron," an erroneous name reflecting its habit of waiting for prey to come close
- Almost every evening found among the noisy group of egrets on the golden bamboo plants by the parking lot near the entrance

Jungle Myna (Acridotheres Fuscus)

- Occasionally kept as pets
- As secondary cavity nesters, they do not construct their own nests but rather use holes in trees or man-made structures to breed
- Generally shy and solitary but will form flocks in winter

Little Cormorant (Microcarbo Niger)

- Often seen sitting on the exposed rock in the pond on campus or higher up in the trees drying its wings, a behaviour typical for cormorants
- Thrives around various freshwater bodies, including ponds, lakes, streams, and sometimes coastal estuaries
- Captures fish with its sharp beak and propels itself under water with webbed feet
- Similar but larger species are commonly found across europe, although once almost extinct due to targetet killing by humans to limit competition for fisheries

Little Egret (Egretta Garzetta)


- Graceful white heron known for distinctive yellow feet and black beaks
- Almost every evening found in a noisy group of many individuals on the golden bamboo plants by the parking lot near the entrance
- Occasionally seen by the pond on campus
- During breeding season, they develop long, decorative plumes on their heads and backs
- In late 19th and early 20th centuries extensively hunted for their beautiful plumes, which were used in fashion, nearly driving them to extinction
- They actively stir the water with their yellow feet to disorient and flush out fish and other prey from the bottom of shallow water
- Carnivorous, primarily eating fish, crustaceans, amphibians, insects

Medium Egret (Ardea Intermedia)


- Beautiful bird with pure white plumage
- The characteristic yellow beak turns dark during breeding season
- Proportionally almost identical to the Great Eastern Egret, but slightly smaller
- Almost every evening found in a noisy group of many individuals on the golden bamboo plants by the parking lot near the entrance
- Occasionally stalking on grassy areas on campus hunting frogs & lizards, especially in the morning

Red-Wattled Lapwing (Vanellus Indicus)


- Regular sight around the pond by the bistro
- Nest on the ground insted of trees
- Primarily feed on insects
- Ofter found near bodies of water
- Their loud warning calls are known to other animals as well as an indicator of approaching danger

Spotted Owlet (Athene Brama)


- Occasionally seen in groups after dusk by the recreational park near the "I love UAI" sign
- Female larger than male
- Well adapted to urban areas & helpful in controlling insect & rodent pests
- "Athene" from greek godess of wisdom, "Brama" from Hindu supreme spirit

White-Breasted Waterhen (Amaurornis Phoenicurus)


- Has been found breeding and raising chicks along the edges of the pond on campus
- Prefers shallow bodies of water & feeds on insects, small fish and seeds
- Common across South & South-East Asia

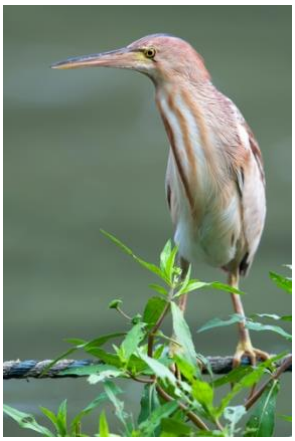
White - Cheeked Barbet (Psilopogon Viridis)

- Has been observed among the group of egrets by the parking lot
- Found in evergreen and deciduous forests, gardens, and orchards, primarily in the Western Ghats and hills of South India
- As primarily fruit-eating birds, they play a vital role in dispersing the seeds of various trees and plants in their habitat
- Get most of their water from fruit diet
- Excavate their own nest cavities in trees, a process that takes about 20 days

White-Throated Kingfisher (Halcyon Smyrnensis)

- Beautiful bird, generally common in India both near and far from water
- Only rarely seen on campus
- Much larger in size than the common kingfisher
- Feeds on insects, small reptiles, amphibians, fish and crustaceans

Yellow Bittern (Ixobrychus Sinensis)



- Although a secretive & shy bird, it can occasionally be observed along the edges of the pond by the plaza, especially around dawn
- Characteristic white plumage under the wings, visible when flying away
- Feeds on fish and other aquatic prey
- A rather small heron, measuring approximately 36-38 cm
- Prefers wetlands, including marshes, swamps, and rice paddies, often nesting in dense reeds and grasses near water

Insects

Ants

Indian Black Ant (Camponotus Compressus)

- Can be observed around the last bench in front of the boys hostel before the club house
- Common large black ant (≈ 1.5cm long) found in India and South-East Asia
- Ground-nesting & found in parks, gardens, and human habitats
- Feeds on plant secretions like honeydew produced by aphids and other sap-sucking insects, which they protect from predators, forming a symbiosis
- Generally harmless but can inflict a painful bite when agitated
- Incredibly strong, capable of carrying up to 50 times their own body weight

Longhorn Crazy Ant (Paratrechina Longicornis)

- Widespread on campus
- Name comes from their extremely long antennae, legs jerky & erratic movements when foraging, rather than following established trails
- Have a unique reproductive system where the mother queen's daughters are genetically identical clones of the mother, and her sons are clones of the father
- When carrying large objects, non-carrying ants lay pheromone trails to guide the carrying group, a behavior called "locally-blazed" trails
- Adaptable, living in diverse habitats from soil and mulch to wall voids, and are notable for their damage to electrical equipment and tendency to spread via human transport of goods

Tropical Fire Ant (Solenopsis Geminata)

- Brown to reddish-orange with bodies measuring about 2 to 6 mm long
- Colonies contain workers of different sizes and forms, with "major" workers having disproportionately large, square heads
- Their nests are often large, sandy mounds with intricate underground tunnels, housing hundreds of thousands of workers
- Known for their painful, burning sting: they first bite to anchor themselves, then sting to inject venom that causes a burning sensation
- Omnivores and will eat anything from seeds and seedlings to small mammals and birds

Butterflies & Moths

Artena Submira


- First described by Francis Walker in 1858

Blue Tiger (Tirumala Limniace)


Butterfly Caterpillar

- Distasteful to predators due to chemicals obtained from their larval host plants
- Found widely in India and other parts of Southeast Asia
- Prefers tropical forests, gardens, and open fields
- Adult lifespan of up to 6 months

Common Baron (Euthalia Aconthea)


Butterfly Caterpillar

- Feeds on overripe & rotten fruits, plant sap, and tree sap, especially from mango trees
- Common across India & Sri Lanka
- Found in urban areas as well, especially around markets
- Adult lifespan of 8-12 days

Great Eggfly (*Hypolimnas Bolina)*

Female

Male

- Common across Asia, Australia, Madagascar, and New Zealand
- Feeds on nectar
- Lays eggs on underside of leaves of host plants
- Wingspan around 7-8cm, adult lifespan of around 2 months

Household casebearer (Phereoeca Uterella)

- Especially in its larval stage (left picture) probably present in every hostel on campus
- Larva constructs its protective case from silk and attaches debris like soil, sand, lint, and paint fragments to it
- Considered a household pest as they feed on natural fibers, including hair, lint, and woolens & spider webs
- Adult moths have reduced mouthparts and are unable to feed, with their primary goal being reproduction

Dragonflies

Wandering Glider (Pantala Flavescens)

- Can be seen in great amounts on campus after the rain
- Lay their eggs by dipping their "tails" swiftly into bodies of water, e.g. the puddles on the empty space between the main building & club house
- Worlds most widespread dragonfly
- Migratory species with individuals travelling up to 6000km to reach breeding grounds by travelling with favorable winds
- Highest flying dragonfly, having been observed at an altitude of 6000m in the Himalaya
- Also called "City Dragonfly" due to its adaption to human environments
- Adults feed on airborne insects while their larvea are active aquatic predators, feeding on insects and even small fish

Slender Skimmer (Orthetrum Sabina)

- Not as common on campus as the Wandering Glider
- Voracious predator that feeds on smaller butterflies and even other dragonflies
- Globally a common species that can be seen far from water although it still relies on still bodies of water like ponds & puddles for breeding

Mosquitos

Mosquitos are by far the deadliest creature in the world when it comes to annual human deaths, causing around 10,00,000 deaths per year, compared to 100,000 deaths from snakes and 250 from lions.

Asian Tiger Mosquito (Aedes Albopictus)

- Not very common on campus but can occasionally be seen
- Due to global warming, now also spreading towards central Europe and the US
- Lays their eggs on the sides of containers just above the water surface
- Can carry and transmit several serious viruses, including: West Nile Virus, Dengue Fever, Yellow Fever, Zika Virus, Chikungunya
- Active during the day

Culex Mosquitoe / Common House Mosquito (Culex)

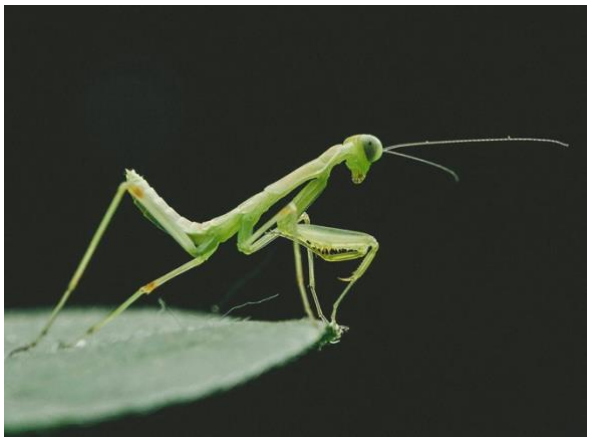
- Active at night, but especially around dusk & dawn
- Feed on both humans and a variety of animals, especially birds and mammals
- Key identifying feature is their body resting parallel to a surface, unlike Anopheles mosquitoes, which rest at an angle
- Transmits serious diseases, e.g. West Nile Virus, Japanese Encephalitis, and Lymphatic Filariasis (Elephantiasis)

Miscellaneous

Asian Bell Cricket


- Famous for its unique, chiming song
- In Japan, sometimes kept as pets in bamboo cages & their song has cultural significance, with some people meditating to it at temples
- Omnivorous, eating plants, fungi, and sometimes other small insects
- Observed only rarely on campus but easily differentiated from other crickets due to its more melodic chirping

Praying Mantis (Odontomantis)




- The specimen I observed was only around 2cm large and thus most likely a juvenile
- They wait patiently, using their camouflage to stay hidden and use powerful, spiked front legs to trap and hold prey
- Only eat live prey, usually insects, and sometimes larger animals like small birds and frogs
- Only insect with the ability to rotate their triangular head up to 180 degrees, giving them a wide field of vision
- Female mantises are known to eat their male mates after mating

House Cricket (Acheta Domesticus)

- Male crickets chirp by rubbing their wings together to attract females
- Noise can reach 100 decibel, comparative to industrial noise (car horn ≈ 110 decibel)
- Their ears, or auditory organs, are located on their front legs
- Provide a nutrient-dense and environmentally sustainable food source for humans, rich in protein, healthy fats, and essential minerals and vitamins
- Can be eaten dried, roasted, fried, or powdered and integrated into foods like gluten-free bread

Rice Grasshopper (Hieroglyphus banian)

- Considered a significant pest in South-East Asia, causing yield loss by feeding on plants of rice, maize, sugarcane and millet
- Eggs require the cycle of dry summer followed by monsoon rains to hatch
- Young nymphs are yellow with reddish-brown spots and become green as they grow
- Females are larger (35-54 mm) than males (28-40 mm)

Spiders

Myrmarachne

- Known for remarkable ant mimicry, using body shape, color, and movement to resemble different ant species
- To mimic ant's antennae, they wave their front legs in the air. High-speed cameras reveal they walk on all eight legs, but lift their forelimbs when stationary to "signal" their ant-like identity
- Mimicry serves as a defense mechanism, deterring predators that are wary of aggressive, stinging ants
- Belongs to group of jumping spiders but *Myrmarachne* don't stalk and leap for prey; instead, they tap the prey with their front legs before lunging from close range
- Feeds on range of arthropod prey, with some species being particularly adept at catching moths or preying on other spiders' eggs by entering their nests

Garden Tent - Web Spider (Cyrtophora cicatrosa)

- Instead of flat orb webs, tent-web spiders weave elaborate, multi-dimensional, tent-like structures
- Silk used in these webs is not sticky, but the intricate design effectively traps flying insects
- Construct green, bean-like silk sacs to protect their eggs and young
- Common sight in the greenery on campus, most notably in the flower pots along the path outside of the main building facing the club house

Giant Wood Spider (Nephila Pilipes)


- Largest spider found in Maharashtra
- While females are large (up to 50mm body size), males are comparably tiny, around 5-6mm
- Females build massive, intricate orb webs that can span 1 to 2 meters in diameter
- Key predators of agricultural pests and large insects, playing an important role in controlling insect populations
- Been observed catching even small birds
- The female leaves the web to find a secluded spot to lay eggs in a cocoon, after which she dies

Jumping Spider (Salticidae)


- The jumping spider family, Salticidae, is the largest and most diverse of all spider families, boasting more than 6,000 described species found in nearly every terrestrial habitat on Earth
- 29 recorded species found in Maharashtra
- Can jump astonishing distances, sometimes up to 50 times their own body length
- Highly intelligent with brains capable of learning, problem-solving, and possibly even dreaming
- Possess 8 uniquely arranged eyes that provide almost 360 degree vision
- Before jumping, they attach a silk thread to their surface for safety

Mammals

Bats

Greater short-nosed fruit bat Cynopterus sphinx


- Can be seen feeding on the ripe fruit of the fig tree by the plaza after dusk
- Diet includes guava, banana, chikoo, and lychee and nectar
- Known for building their own tent-like shelters from palm leaves
- Important for ecosystems due to dispersion of seeds
- Relatively large with wingspan of around 50cm.

Indian Flying Fox / Greater Indian Fruit Bat


- Largest bat in the world, wingspan up to 1.5m, weight up to 1.6kg
- Average lifespan in the wild: 15 years, oldest individual recorded: 44 years
- Related species are found across South-East Asia and Australia
- Feeds mostly on fruits and nectar and plays a vital role as pollinator and seed disperser, thus helping to maintain the health of ecosystems and plant populations
- Greatest threat: Habitat loss through deforestation & urbanisation

Lesser Asiatic Yellow Bat (Scotophilus Kuhlii)


- Can be observed daily after dusk flying around the rectangle, or resting in the empty space underneath the gym
- Feeds mostly on insects, especially mosquitos and sometimes fruit or nectar
- Poses no threat to humans!
- Uses echolocation to navigate and hunt
- Common & widely spread across South & South-East Asia

Reptiles

Lizards

Common House Gecko (Hemidactylus Frenatus)


- Very common in Asia that has successfully adapted to the human environment by living in & around houses for shelter and hunting insects at night
- Continues to spread across the world via shipping containers
- Possess thousands of microscopic pads on toes to climb walls & other surfaces
- Like many lizards, it can detach its tail as distracting "sacrifice"
- Pose threat to humans but can help reduce insects in houses

Keeled Indian Mabuya (Eutropis Carinata)


- A shy and quick skink but can be observed all over the campus where loose soil or leaves provide opportunities for hiding
- Can grow up to 35cm in size
- Feeds mostly on insects
- Like many lizards, it can detach its tail as distracting "sacrifice" so the skink can escape

Oriental Garden Lizard (Calotes Versicolor)



- A slender and quick lizard, often seen hiding in the leaves of bushes & tall grasses (Even observed climbing the net surrounding the football court)
- Can change their color to match surroundings and hide from predators
- Able to move their eyes in different directions for a wide angle vision
- Feed on insects and thus play an important role in pest control
- After the spraying and killing of the majority of wild plant on campus in August/September 2025 their number has greatly reduced here
- Body length including tail usually around 20cm, but can reach up to 35cm

Snakes

Although numerous different species of snakes have been seen on campus, none of them actually "live" here due to the high presence of people and dogs. Instead, they may be crossing the area coming from the hills in search of food or mating partners while also occasionally being washed downstream after periods of strong rain. That said, if one were to be curious about which specimen can occasionally be seen on campus, they would simply have to research which snakes inhabit the forests of Maharashtra and the Western Ghats, as the ones that accidentally invade our campus can arguably be any of them. That diversity is indeed outstanding and already includes many more than can be found across all of Europe! Only a few of them are venomous, and a bite will always be in defense, as snakes are generally shy, elusive, and afraid of humans. Thus, if observed with care and a reasonable mind, none have to be afraid of snakes.