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Small but Mighty

Across India's forests, grasslands, treetops and streams live creatures so small, you might never spot them even if they were right under your nose. But these tiny animals – some lighter than a raindrop – are vital to the balance of life. They pollinate, clean, decompose and even protect. Being tiny doesn't mean you are not important. This book brings you stories of the smallest wild wonders of India.





Why Do Tiny Animals Matter?

Tiny creatures do big jobs! Many are pollinators, decomposers or pest controllers. Some are food for larger animals. Without them, food chains and ecosystems would collapse. Tiny animals also clean up waste, move nutrients through soil and water, and keep plants healthy. Without them, the natural world simply wouldn't work.



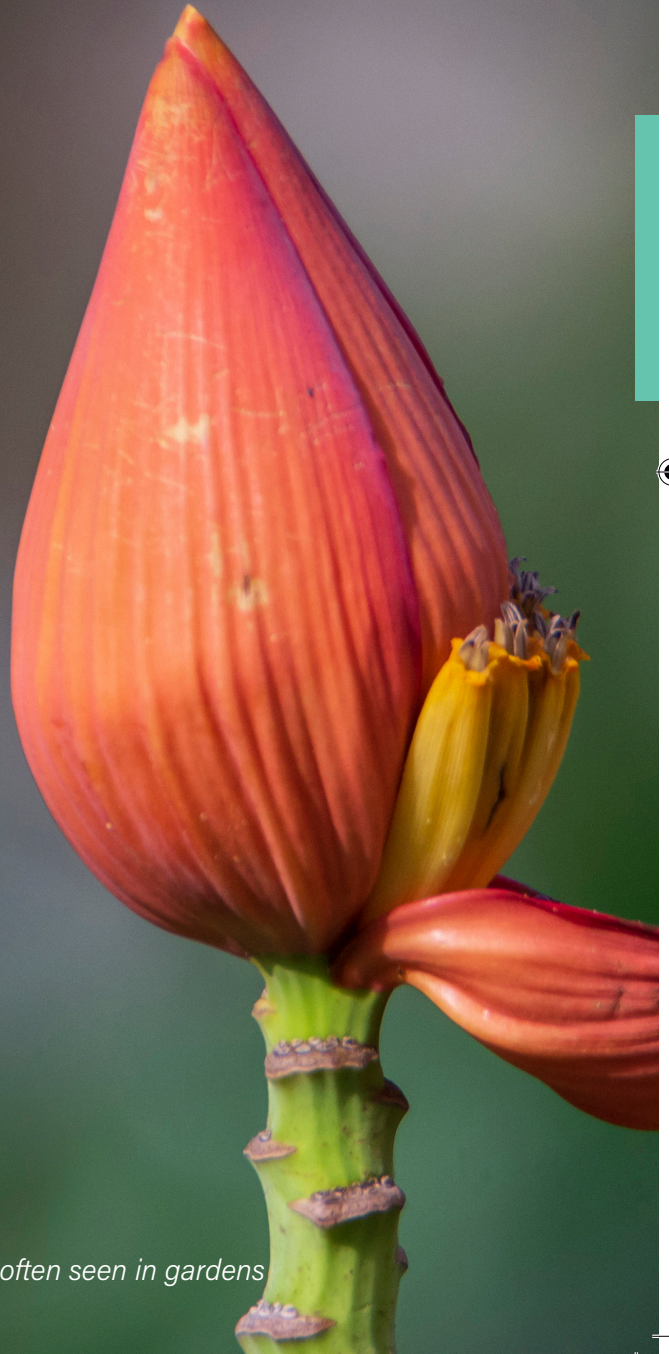
Chevrotains are a shy, little animal found in peninsular India





How Do They Survive Being so Small?

Being tiny is tricky – one wrong step and you're squashed or swept away! But small animals are full of clever tricks: camouflage, quick movements, hiding places and strange superpowers help them survive.



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The pale-billed flowerpecker, often seen in gardens



Why Don't We Know More About Them?

Because they're so small, many of these animals are still being discovered. Some were only found recently by scientists using special tools. Others have been around us all along – just too quick, quiet or camouflaged to be seen. Perhaps after reading this book, you'll keep a sharper lookout!





How Can Something so Small Be Important?

It's easy to think bigger animals are more important – but tiny ones work just as hard. They clean, feed and protect the world in ways we often ignore. Without them, bigger animals (and even humans!) would struggle to survive. The smaller the creature, the closer it is to the foundation of life.





Etruscan Shrew

Find Me Here!

Leaf litter,
hedgerows and
forest edges in
southern India.

CRITTER STATS

Scientific name: *Suncus etruscus*

Size: 3.5–5.2 cm – about the size of your fingertip

Weight: less than 2 gm

Lifespan: around 1.5 years

Habitat: forests, gardens, grasslands

Conservation status: least concern



The Etruscan shrew is the smallest mammal in the world by mass – weighing less than a two-rupee coin! But don't let its size fool you. This tiny insect-eater is a speed machine with a heartbeat so fast it can barely sit still. It's nature's tiniest live wire.



This shrew is smaller than a paper clip and could easily fit on your fingertip – but its appetite is huge for its size.

It needs to eat constantly – up to twice its body weight in food every day – or risk starving to death in just a few hours.





Its heart beats incredibly fast, reaching up to 1,511 beats per minute, faster than any other mammal – helping it stay active and alert.

It uses its long snout to sniff out insects, worms and spiders. Its sharp reflexes make it a fearsome predator – in miniature.

You'll rarely spot it in the wild. It hides in leaves or burrows and comes out mostly at night.





DID YOU KNOW?

The Etruscan shrew has a brain-to-body mass ratio close to that of humans – so, small but smart!



It emits high-pitched squeaks when exploring. Some scientists believe these may help it navigate – a bit like primitive echolocation.



This is one creature that is fast and furious – if the shrew were scaled to human size, it would be able to run a mile in 40 seconds.

