Grizzled Giant Squirrel

Prelims – *Current events of national Importance | General issues on Bio-diversity.*

Mains (GS III) – *Conservation.*

Why in News?

The Villupuram Forest Division, Tamil Nadu has planned to conduct a population study of the grizzled giant squirrel to provide a fillip to the long-pending demand for notifying the hills as a wildlife sanctuary.

- It is a large tree squirrel, arboreal, crepuscular (active at dawn and dusk) and spend most of their time foraging in the canopy.
- **Scientific name -** Ratufa macroura.
- **Habitat -** Canopy of tropical and subtropical forests in South Asia.
- **Distribution -** Found in Central and Uva provinces of Sri Lanka, and in patches of *riparian forest* along the Kaveri River and in the hill forests of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala states of southern India.
- **Appearance -** Grizzled giant squirrels are the smallest of the giant squirrels.



- It has a distinctive grizzled, grayish-brown fur on its back, with a creamy-white belly. Its fur is soft and dense, and its long bushy tail is usually darker than the rest of its body.
- **Characteristics** - They are agile climbers and jumpers, able to leap up to 6 metres between trees.
- Their bushy tail is used for balance while jumping and as a parachute while descending. They are also important seed dispersers for many plant species in their habitat.
- While males are generally larger than females, there are no significant physical differences between the sexes.

- **Diet -**Primarily herbivorous, feeding on fruits, nuts, and leaves.
- **Conservation Status**
    - **CITES –** Schedule II.
    - **WPA, 1972** – Schedule I.
    - **IUCN** - Near threatened.
- **Threats -** Habitat loss, Poaching and Pet Trade.

Tamil Nadu Government established Grizzled Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary in 1988.

Reference

[The Hindu | Grizzled Giant Squirrel]

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