Tenkasi Forest Division adds the Madras hedgehog to its 'Golden Jackal Ambassadors' conservation programme

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News

On 22 Oct 2026 the Tenkasi Forest Division proposed adding the Madras hedgehog – locally called 'mulleli' – to its 'Golden Jackal Ambassadors' programme launched in 2025. The programme trains students, volunteers and village youth as conservation ambassadors. Hedgehogs have been recorded around Alangulam, Sankarankovil, Sivagiri and Uthumalai; in a survey of 867 people in 38 villages, 53% reported seeing them during the monsoon. Habitat loss, road kills and hunting for supposed medicinal use are the main threats. Note: do not confuse it with the porcupine ('mullampanri'); the animal in this news is the hedgehog ('mulleli').

Key facts

Animal	Madras / bare-bellied hedgehog – Paraechinus nudiventris
IUCN status	Least Concern; very poorly studied
Range	Southern India only – most records from Tamil Nadu grasslands and scrub
Programme	Golden Jackal Ambassadors – Tenkasi Forest Division (2025)
Funding	₹1 crore for 4 lesser-known species (2025); ₹20.5 lakh for the hedgehog
Study	Theri forests (Thoothukudi) – AIWC, Vandalur

Background

- Science: the hedgehog is a nocturnal, insect-eating mammal (order Eulipotyphla) that rolls into a spiny ball when threatened. The porcupine is entirely different – it is a rodent.
- State funding: in Oct 2025 Tamil Nadu set aside ₹1 crore for four lesser-known endangered species – lion-tailed macaque (₹48.5 lakh), Madras hedgehog (₹20.5 lakh), hump-backed mahseer (₹17 lakh) and striped hyena (₹14 lakh). The ₹50-crore TN Endangered Species Conservation Fund is managed by AIWC, Vandalur.
- Other TN efforts: Project Nilgiri Tahr (2022); India's first Dugong Conservation Reserve – Palk Bay (2022); India's first slender loris sanctuary – Kadavur (Karur & Dindigul, 2022); Grizzled Giant Squirrel Sanctuary – Srivilliputhur.
- Law: Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 – the 2022 amendment simplified the schedules (Schedules I and II for animals).

Tamil Nadu link: most records of the Madras hedgehog come from Tamil Nadu – the grasslands of Tenkasi district and the Theri forests of Thoothukudi (studied by AIWC, Vandalur, since Jan 2026). Under the Madras Hedgehog Conservation Project (2025–26), a radio-tagged hedgehog gave birth in the Peikulam grassland in Oct 2026.

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