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New Mangrove Crab Species Chhapparus ngankeeae Discovered in Goa

23 March 2026

SUBJECTS COVERED

ENVIRONMENT

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New Mangrove Crab Species *Chhapgarus ngankeeae* Discovered in Goa

23 March 2026 · 4 min read

WHY IN NEWS

Zoologist Sameer Kumar Pati of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has identified a new marine crab species, *Chhapgarus ngankeeae*, from Goa's mangrove ecosystems after re-examining preserved specimens that had been misidentified for years as *Chhapgarus intermedius*.

New Mangrove Crab Discovery — Taxonomic Breakthrough from India's West Coast

Discovery Details

The discovery came through a detailed **re-evaluation of specimens** housed in the **National Zoological Collections** at ZSI. Samples originally collected from the mangroves of Goa, Karnataka, and Maharashtra had been classified as *Chhapgarus intermedius*. Microscopic examination revealed subtle but consistent **morphological differences** that confirmed these were a distinct, previously undocumented species.

FEATURE	DETAIL
Species name	<i>Chhapgarus ngankeeae</i>
Discoverer	Sameer Kumar Pati (ZSI)
Family	Varunidae (grapsoid crabs)
Order	Decapoda; Infraorder: Brachyura
Size	~1.6 cm
Habitat	Intertidal mangrove areas
Distribution	West coast of India (Goa, Karnataka, Maharashtra)
Published in	Marine Biology Research journal

Naming

The species name **ngankeeae** honours the late **Dr Ngan Kee Ng**, a marine biologist from the National University of Singapore, recognised for her significant contributions to crustacean taxonomy.

Why Museum Taxonomy Matters

This discovery highlights the critical role of **museum collections** in biodiversity research. Many new species are discovered not in the field but by re-examining specimens already housed in collections — sometimes decades after they were collected. India’s National Zoological Collections, maintained by ZSI, contain over **15 million specimens** spanning insects, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and marine fauna.

Mangrove Crabs — Ecological Engineers

Mangrove crabs play a vital role in coastal ecosystems:

- **Nutrient recycling:** Crabs break down leaf litter, accelerating decomposition and nutrient cycling
- **Soil aeration:** Burrowing activity improves soil structure and oxygen penetration
- **Food chain support:** Crabs are prey for fish, birds, and larger crustaceans
- **Sediment stabilisation:** Burrowing and feeding activities help bind mangrove sediments
- **Indicator species:** Crab diversity reflects overall mangrove health

India’s Mangrove Cover

India has the **fourth-largest mangrove cover** in the world after Indonesia, Brazil, and Australia:

PARAMETER	DATA
Total mangrove cover	4,992 sq km (ISFR 2023)
Increase from 2021	+54 sq km
Largest mangrove	Sundarbans, West Bengal (~4,200+ sq km)
Top 3 states	West Bengal, Gujarat, Andaman & Nicobar Islands
Goa mangrove cover	~26 sq km

India’s mangroves are distributed across **12 states and Union Territories** along the coastline. Key mangrove areas include: Sundarbans (West Bengal), Gulf of Kutch and Gulf of Khambhat (Gujarat), Bhitarkanika (Odisha), Pichavaram (Tamil Nadu), and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)

FEATURE	DETAIL
Founded	1916
Headquarters	Kolkata
Parent ministry	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Director	Currently headed by Dr Dhriti Banerjee (first woman Director)
Function	Faunal survey, exploration, taxonomic research, biodiversity documentation
Collections	Over 15 million specimens in National Zoological Collections

ZSI operates 16 regional centres across India and has documented over **1,02,718 faunal species** from the Indian subcontinent.

Goa's Biodiversity

Despite being India's smallest state (3,702 sq km), Goa is a biodiversity hotspot situated within the **Western Ghats** — one of the world's 36 biodiversity hotspots:

- **Forest cover:** ~56% of geographic area
- **Protected areas:** Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary, Mollem National Park, Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary, Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary
- **Marine biodiversity:** Rich mangrove ecosystems along estuaries of Mandovi, Zuari, and Terekhol rivers
- **Western Ghats:** UNESCO World Heritage Site (2012)

UPSC RELEVANCE

ZSI (founded 1916, HQ Kolkata), India's mangrove cover (4,992 sq km), Sundarbans, Varunidae family, Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot.

MAINS GS-3:

Role of taxonomic research in biodiversity conservation; mangrove ecosystem services and threats; importance of museum collections for species documentation.

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

CHHAPGARUS NGANKEEAE:

Discovered by: Sameer Kumar Pati (Zoological Survey of India)

Size: ~1.6 cm

Family: Varunidae (grapsoid crabs)

Habitat: Intertidal mangroves, west coast of India

Distribution: Goa, Karnataka, Maharashtra

Named after: Dr Ngan Kee Ng (National University of Singapore)

Journal: Marine Biology Research

ZOOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA (ZSI):

Founded: 1916

HQ: Kolkata

Parent: MoEFCC

Collections: 15 million+ specimens

Species documented: 1,02,718+ from India

Regional centres: 16 across India

INDIA'S MANGROVES:

Total cover: 4,992 sq km (ISFR 2023)

Change: +54 sq km from 2021

Largest: Sundarbans (~4,200+ sq km)

Goa: ~26 sq km

Global rank: 4th (after Indonesia, Brazil, Australia)

MANGROVE ECOSYSTEM SERVICES:

Coastal protection from storms and erosion

Carbon sequestration (blue carbon)

Nursery for commercially important fish and shrimp

Water filtration and sediment trapping

Biodiversity support

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

India is one of 17 mega-biodiverse countries

BSI (Botanical Survey of India) covers flora; ZSI covers fauna

Western Ghats: 1 of 36 global biodiversity hotspots

India has 4 biodiversity hotspots: Western Ghats, Eastern Himalaya, Indo-Burma, Sundaland

Sources: [Herald Goa](#), [Research Matters](#), [Vajiram & Ravi](#)

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