

Myristica swamp tree frog

December 17, 2020

In news

Recently, the Rare Myristica Swamp Tree frog has been recorded for the first time north of the Shencottah gap in Vazhachal Reserve Forest in Thrissur.

About Myristica Swamp Tree frog

- Myristica Swamp Tree frog is a rare arboreal species endemic to the Western Ghats that bears the scientific name *Mercurana myristica palustris*
- The frog was first described in 2013 from the lowland Myristica swamps of Arippa, near Kulathupuzha Reserve Forest, in the western foothills of Agasthyamalai.
- The current species was spotted by the researchers 170 km north of Arippa.
- Unlike the Myristica Swamp Treefrog found in the foothills of the Agasthyamalai, these frogs were found to be active throughout June and early July and has adapted to a non-Myristica swamp predominant with the plant *Polyalthia fragrans*

Its Unique breeding behavior

- According to the researchers, these frogs are rare and elusive for the reason that they are arboreal and active only for a few weeks during their breeding season.
- During this season, there is a large aggregation of males that descend from the high canopy of the trees.
- The males vocalise in groups from the low perches in the swamps. They exhibit unique breeding behaviour.
- The breeding season, unlike for other frogs, starts in the pre-monsoons season (May) and ends before the monsoon becomes fully active in June.
- Before the end of the breeding season, the female frogs

along with their male counterparts descend to the forest floor.

- The female digs the mud and lays eggs in shallow burrows in mud.
- After breeding and egg-laying, they retreat back to the high canopies of the tree and remain elusive till the next breeding season.

A brief note on Myristica Swamp

- Myristica swamps are a type of freshwater swamp forest predominantly composed of species of Myristica.
- These are found in two localities in India. Myristica swamps have adapted to inundation by way of stilt roots and knee roots.
- They are fragmented, and endangered ecosystems restricted to small patches found in southern Kerala, Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka, Goa, and recently discovered in the northern Western Ghats of Maharashtra.
- Myristica swamps. Comprised mainly of evergreen trees of the Myristicaceae family—one of the most primitive families of flowering plants renowned for the nutmeg tree species, the swamps are rich in biodiversity
- Owing to their ability to hold water all-year-around, Myristica swamps play a crucial role in sustaining water in the streams and groundwater sources. The swamps act as sponge in a landscape
- In addition, during heavy rains, they help in moderating floodwaters