

Internal Seminar

Behavioural Adaptations of Pikas to Alpine Stressors

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Small mammals that live in alpine habitats face extreme cold in the winter and experience large scale seasonal fluctuations in resource abundance. I examined if burrowing behaviour in the order Lagomorpha (pikas, rabbits and hares) is a thermoregulatory adaptation at current or historical timescales using a combination of comparative phylogenetics, historical demographic inference and field experiments. I found that burrowing behaviour was associated with both sociality and r-selected life history strategies. Such a behavioural syndrome is consistent with both thermoregulation and predation pressure at historical timescales driving the evolution of such behaviour. I also explored how species with different lifestyles co-occur at small spatial scales at high elevations of Ladakh using niche partitioning and documented the food caching behaviour of two different species of pikas from India, for the first time. My work highlights the need for integrating studies of behaviour to manage sensitive high elevation specialists under threat of extinction due to climate change.

Wednesday, Aug 14th 2024

14:30 Hrs

Seminar Hall, TIFR-H