

# The Fishtail Palm

Did you know the fishtail palm (*Caryota urens*) gets its name because its leaves resemble a fish's tail? "Urens" means "stinging" because tiny crystals in its fruit can irritate the skin! The tree can grow very tall—up to 20 meters with a slender, ringed trunk!

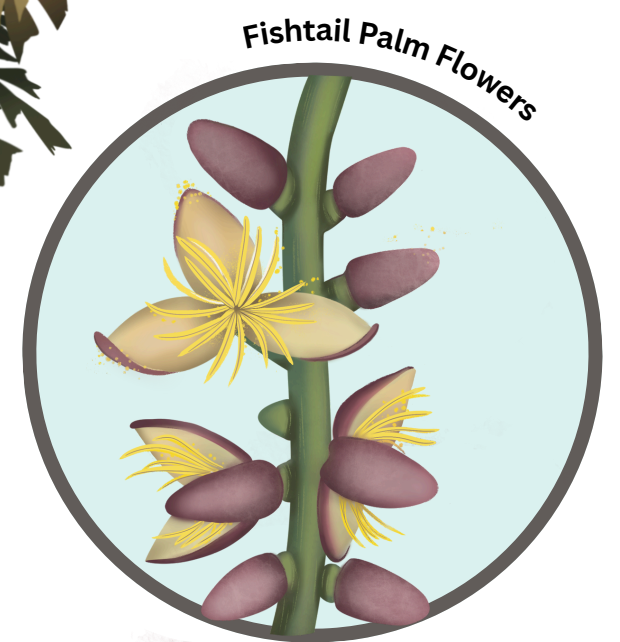
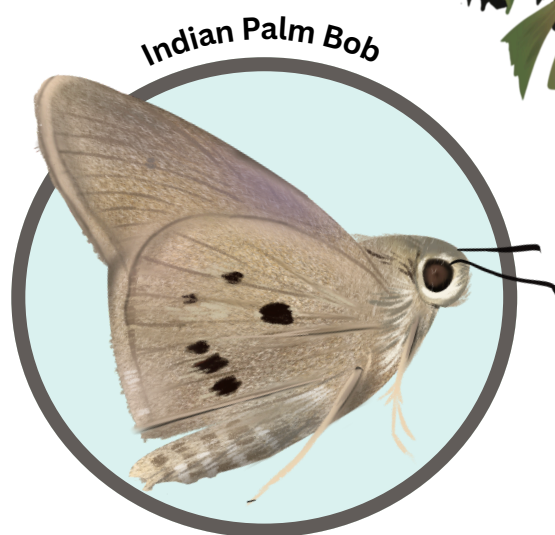
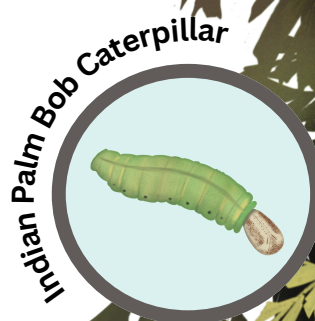
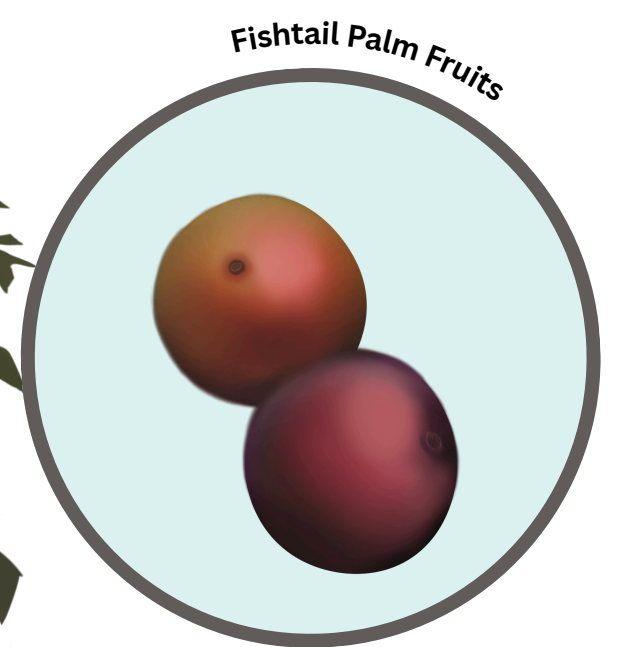
The fishtail palm is home to many wild animals like bats, palm civets, monkeys, butterflies, birds, insects, and epiphytes like orchids and ferns.

## Hornbills

These impressive birds with large beaks love eating the juicy fruits, and along with other animals like palm civets, help spread its seeds by carrying them away to new places!

## Epiphytes

Epiphytes are plants that grow on other host plants, they use the host plant for support, but they do not take any food or water resources from it. Can you spot the epiphyte here?



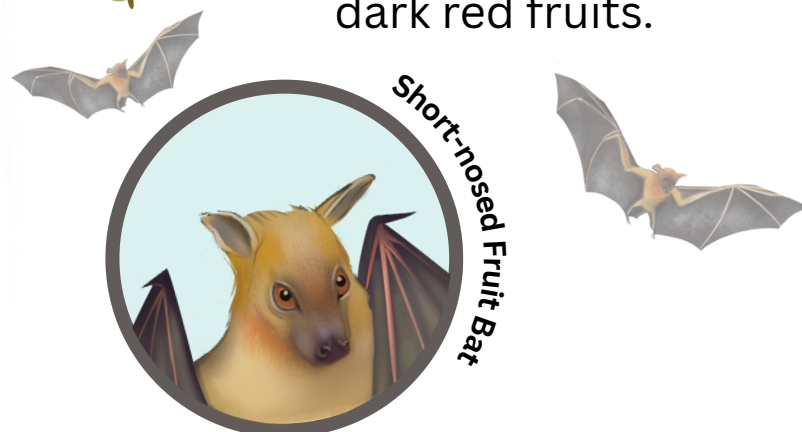
## Palm Bobs

These small butterflies lay their eggs on the fishtail palm. When the eggs hatch, the caterpillars feed on the leaves. Palm bobs get their name because their caterpillars feed on various palm trees.

An individual tree flowers only once in its lifetime! It grows small white or yellow flowers in clusters that later turn into dark red fruits.

## A Part of Indian Culture

The strong trunks were traditionally used to make tools for levelling paddy fields. Also, the large leaves were used to create decorative "pandals" for weddings and other celebrations.



## Fruit Bats

These nighttime visitors use their sharp teeth to cut through the fruit clusters and enjoy a delicious snack. Some like the short-nosed fruit bats even build temporary resting places using the leaves!

# Activities

**Write a Short Story:** Imagine you are an animal, a bird or an insect living on the fishtail palm. Write a story about your adventures on this amazing tree!

**Be a Nature Detective:** Find a fishtail palm in your school, park, or neighbourhood. Look closely at the leaves and around the tree! Do you see animal droppings, feathers, or remains of fruits? Are they pecked, half-eaten, or fallen to the ground? Who could have done this? Draw what you see, click a picture, or write a short note.

A chewed leaf might be a monkey's lunch break, while tiny insect bites could tell us that insects are using the leaves and other parts of the tree. Scat near the base could be a nighttime visitor. By checking these clues and comparing them to what animals leave behind, we can become nature detectives!

Ask the elders in your community about any stories, songs, or traditions related to plants in your community. Document and share this in your class and with your friends.