நமது வனம்

NAMATHU VANAM

Nov 2023 - Jan 2024

(A Quarterly e-magazine of TASPEF)

(For free circulation only)

Above - Asian Emerald Dove
(Chalcophaps indica)
Below - Nilgiri LaughingThrush (Montecincla cachinnans)
Endangered species, endemic to western ghats
Photographed by K.Dhanapal

TAMIL NADU ASSOCIATION OF SENIOR PROFESSIONALS OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (TASPEF)

(Regd No 270/2007 dt 10.09.2007)

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TASPEF CONDUCTED AGM ON 17.09.2023

Executive President Addressed in the AGM

TAMILNADU ASSOCIATION OF SENIOR PROFESSIONALS
OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
(TASPEF)

"கானின்றி அமையாது நீரும்
நீரின்றி அமையாது உலகும்"

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Issue No : 3

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Birthday Wishes

The Editorial team wishes all the members who are celebrating their birthday in the months of November, December and January 2024.

"A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY"

Musings of the Editor,

Greetings to all esteemed TASPEF members & Forest Fraternites,

Our editorial team of Namathu Vanam is bring back our own, e-magazine after a few years gap.

This is possible only because of the cooperation and enthusiastic support from you all.

All of us have expertise, experience and articulate well on WhatsApp! Why not share your thoughts, experiences and valuable insights as articles to Namathu vanam?

I remember during my College days, my English teacher used to force us to write something of our own. When I told him my English is not up-to the mark, he said" Dear boy, do not worry nobody becomes master of what they aim to do in a single instance. It is through constant effort you can achieve anything. This writing exercise will give you confidence. Mistakes if any I will correct and you will learn"

Our next edition of the Nathu Vanam will come out in the month of February 2024. You have ample time to recollect and pen down some thoughts

Will you do that?

Warm regards
V. Prabhakaran, IFS,
Editor,
Namathu Vanam

Forest Genetic Resources - Conservation and Management in India

N. Krishna Kumar IFS Rtd.
PCCF and HOFF
Tamil Nadu Forest Department

Introduction

Ranking 10th in the world, with 24.4% of land area under forest and tree cover (India State of Forest Report –ISFR, 2017) , India is endowed with rich biodiversity encompassing variety of living organisms including terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part. There are 16 major forest ecosystems in India which have been classified based on climatic factors including rainfall, soil type, landscape etc. Indian forest areas hold 15,000 species of higher plants of which 33% i.e. 4,900 species is endemic. Apart from floral diversity the faunal diversity in the forests signify the biodiversity richness of the nation.

While the country flourishes with immense biodiversity wealth, the state of Tamil Nadu located at the Southern part of the country also houses rich biodiversity. In Tamil Nadu, 30,952 sq.km. of land area is forests and tree cover which contributes to 3.86% of the total forests of the country and 23.8% of the states's geographic area (ISFR, 2017). The state has 5640 angiosperms, 533 endemic flora, 230 red listed species, 1022 medicinal plants and 184 gymnosperms. The forests of Tamil Nadu can be divided into 9 major classes namely, Tropical Wet Evergreen, Tropical Moist Deciduous, Tropical Dry Deciduous, Montane Wet Temperate, Southern Tropical Thorn Forests, Littoral, Tropical Dry Evergreen, Tropical Semi–Evergreen and Tidal swamp forests. The various forest types provide habitats for diverse fauna which includes, 165 Pisces, 76 Amphibians, 177 Reptiles, 484 Aves and 187 Mammals. With regard to endemic fauna, 36 amphibians, 63 reptiles, 17 aves and 24 mammals are endemic to the state.

About 60% of the country's forest is located in ecologically sensitive zones like the Western Ghats and Himalayas, of which, Western Ghats hotspot is situated in Tamil Nadu. Floristically Western Ghats is one of the richest areas in our country and is one of the 25 locations endowed with rich biodiversity at global level. It is one among the three Indian hotspots with endemic flora and fauna. Western Ghats forests located in Kanyakumari, Kalakkad, Mundanthurai, Kodaikanal, Nilgiris, Anaimalai, Mudumalai, Mukurthi and Srivilliputtur house many red listed floral and faunal species.

What are Forest Genetic Resources (FGRs)?

Forest Genetic Resources has been understood as 'genetic variation in trees of potential or present benefit to humans' (FAO, 1988). In other words Forest genetic resources are genetic material of herbs, shrubs, climbers and tree species of actual or potential value. “Genetic material” refers to reproductive propagating material of plant, such as seeds, tissues, cells,

pollen, DNA molecules etc. containing the functional unit of hereditary, which can be used for combining the desirable traits. FGR is actually a subset of Biodiversity.

Significance of FGRs

Conserving forest genetic resources is vital as genetic variation is the basis of evolution and the catalyst for species to adapt to changes in the environment including climate change. The forest genetic resources are a unique and irreplaceable resource for the future. Wide genetic diversity ensures stability to tree farming systems and sustains changing environmental conditions that may occur in future (Gautam, 2004). Genetic variation of forest trees, both between species and within species, is today being eroded at an increasing pace, mainly due to changes in land use, and to selection and breeding programs carried out without sufficient attention to genetic conservation. Large-scale, uncontrolled movement of germplasm and consequent hybridization between local and introduced species and provenances may also lead to genetic contamination and potential loss of local genepools. In other words, when genetic variation is lost through habitat destruction or intensive breeding, successive generations become less adept at responding to adverse conditions such as atmospheric pollution, climate change, pests and disease and may be totally wiped out. In total, the multifaceted benefits of forest biodiversity addresses to the following,

- Increase productivity or yield
- Reduce pressure on selected group of timber, pulpwood, matchwood, food, fuel, fodder or medicinal value species.
- Build stability, strength and sustainability of agroforestry systems
- Contribute to sound pest and disease management
- Diverse products and income opportunities
- Helps maximize effective use of resources and environment and also restore ecological health

Forest genetic resources are therefore invaluable to humankind not only as a provider of products, services, in aiding economic development but also for their unexplored potential in very many areas.

State of world's forest genetic resources

Recognizing that forest genetic diversity was increasingly being lost, back in 1967, the FAO conference requested the establishment of the Panel of Experts on Forest Gene Resources, to help plan and coordinate the Organization's efforts to manage genetic resources of forest trees. FAO's activities on forest genetic resources are an integral part of the FAO Forestry Programme, and contribute to other programme components, such as national forest programmes, sustainable forest management, tree breeding and plantation development, protected area management, and global forest resources assessment. At its Eleventh Session in June 2007, the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) acknowledged the urgency to conserve and sustainably utilize forest genetic resources to support food security, poverty alleviation and

environmental sustainability, and approved the inclusion of forest genetic resources in its Multi-Year Programme of Work. A State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources (SOW-FGR) Report should be prepared and presented to the Fourteenth Session of the Commission in 2013 which was supported by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Conference. As a follow up, for Asia-Pacific, a first regional workshop on the SOW-FGR was organised in October 2008, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, by FAO in collaboration with APAFRI (The Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions), Bioversity International, APFORGEN (Asia Pacific Forest Genetic Resources programme) and FRIM (Forest Research Institute, Malaysia) (Souvannavong, 2009).

Legal Framework in India

Based on the recommendations of international negotiations, concerned of biodiversity and conservation, India has enacted laws to protect its biological resources. The formulation of a comprehensive Indian Forest Act in 1927, paved way to create rules and regulations that enabled this central act to stay in force when forests were made subject to the state governments. This act addressed to issues related to reserved forests, village forests, protected forests, control over forest and lands not being the property of the government, duty on timber and other forest produce, control of timber and other forest produce in transit, collection of drift and stranded timber, penalties and procedure, cattle trespass, forest officers, subsidiary rules and miscellaneous regulations. Later, in 1980, the Forest Conservation Act was enacted to control indiscriminate diversion of forestland. Under this legislation, approval of the Central Government is required before any forestland is diverted for non-forestry purposes. Moreover, the transfer is allowed only with the provision that compensatory plantations or afforestation are raised in an equivalent area of non-forestland or twice the area in degraded forestlands. In 1988, the act was amended to make the existing provisions more stringent so as to regulate and control the change in the land use of recorded forestland.

The Government of India has also enacted the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity signed at Rio de Janeiro on the 5th day of June 1992, to which India is also a party. This act identifies the strategies and actions that need to be taken with regard to access to genetic resources, their conservation, sustainable use, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits. The act envisages the establishment of a National Biodiversity Authority, State Biodiversity Boards and local level Biodiversity Management Committees to provide for regulated access to biological resources and traditional knowledge associated with them. India has ratified the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of the Intellectual Property Rights. To give effect to this agreement, the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act (PPVFR) was enacted in 2001. As per the act, plant varieties are defined as grouping of plants

within a single taxon of the lowest rank, which can be defined by the expression of the characteristics (descriptors) resulting from a given genotype of that grouping. The Seed Bill 2004, is to provide means for regulating the quality of seeds for sale, import and export and to facilitate production and supply of seeds of quality and for related matters. The Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972 provide protection to wild animals, birds and plants, and related systems, with a view to ensure the ecological and environmental security of the country. In respect to the policy framework, the National Forest Policy 1988 has conservation as one of its basic objectives. It emphasizes the conservation of the natural heritage of the country by preserving the natural forests with a vast variety of flora and fauna, which represent the biological diversity, and genetic resources of the country (Ginwal, 2009).

Conservation of FGRs

Conservation efforts of forest genetic resources can be categorised into two groups namely, conservation of germplasm of economically important species and conservation of wild germplasm of rare or endangered species, regardless of their present usefulness to humankind. While conservation of economically important species are due to strong economic and humanitarian forces, the conservation of wild germplasm is driven by the understanding that biodiversity is the keystone on which economic benefits from plants is derived. In total, only 5% of all plant species have been tested for any beneficial use (Farnsworth, 1988) and it is likely that among the thousands of species yet unexamined, there are many which will provide benefits to humans as food, fibre, oil, pharmaceuticals and other uses. It is noteworthy, that of the 300,000 known species of vascular plants, over 30,000 are of immediate conservation concern (Walters and Gillett, 1997). FAO documents that on the forestry side, despite the fact that high number of species are already in use, only less than 500 species have been systematically studied for their present-day utility and potential.

Conservation of forest genetic resources is best defined as the policies and management action taken to assure their continued availability and existence. The strategy of conservation and the exact methodologies applied depends on the nature of the material, the timescale of concern, and the specific objectives and scope of the program. Conservation may include both *in situ* which is conservation in their original habitat or *ex situ* that is conservation in man-made structures. While *in situ* conservation measures include establishment of preservation plots, seed stands, seed production areas, biosphere reserves, national parks and sanctuaries, protected areas and tiger reserves *ex situ* conservation deals with establishment of seed gene banks, seed orchards, provenance trials, botanical gardens, arboreta, herbal gardens, clonal repositories, herbaria and cryogene banks (Rawat and Ginwal, 2009). Although preserving species in their natural habitat is of primary importance, there are many places where habitats are under threat, from logging, agriculture, urbanization, pollution, etc.

Species which are rare or endemic are of particular concern, since even the loss of relatively small areas of habitat may prove to move these species irreversibly toward extinction. *Ex situ* conservation methods are therefore required to back up the germplasm of these species, otherwise they might be lost for posterity (Pence, 2002).

Awareness creation on Forest Genetic Resources

First report on forest Genetic Resource of India released for inclusion in the World Forest Genetic Resources Report

Conservation in India

Conservation of flora and fauna has been the significant emphasis in forest management. India is known for the *ex-situ* and *in-situ* conservation measures taken to preserve the forest genetic resources. As *in-situ* conservation measure, the country has 14 biosphere reserves, 97 national parks, 508 wildlife sanctuaries, innumerable sacred groves and many botanical gardens. *Ex-situ* conservation of flora is supported through herbaria, seed stands, community reserves, clonal repositories etc. To undertake conservation activities, research institutes like the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB), Coimbatore, Wildlife Institite of India, Dehradun, Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, Anaikatti and forest department research centres are being funded by the government. Inorder to conserve wildlife in *ex-situ* mode and to support education wildlife is conserved and managed in zoological parks. Conservation is also strengthened through legal frame work like the Indian Forests Act, Forest Conservation Act, Biodiversity Act and Wildlife Protection Act.

Conservation of Forest Genetic Resources through seed gene banks

As the FGRs are being lost at an alarming rate, due to several natural and man made reasons, there is need, that they are protected through appropriate conservation strategies. In plants, it is generally the seeds, that carry genetic information from one generation to another, and this can be easily stored for long durations, if the seed moisture is reduced and the seeds are stored under low temperature. Seed banks have facilities to store seeds under controlled environment. *Ex-situ* conservation in the form of seeds in gene banks is the safest and cheapest. Gene banks are compartmentalized cold storage modules in which seeds are kept in controlled conditions of

temperature and humidity. The banks work on the principle that dehydrated seeds are capable of remaining viable for long periods of time in cold and dry conditions. Seeds may be kept in long-term storage (from 0 to -18ºC), medium term storage (0 to 10 ºC) or short term storage (more than 10 ºC) (Kalyani, 2009).

Forest genetic Resources Management Network (FGRMN)

Realizing the urgent need for a national network to look into systematic exploration, collection, evaluation, documentation and conservation of FGRs on a larger and collaborative scale involving a wide spectrum of stakeholders, the establishment of Forest Genetic Resources Management Network has been envisaged very recently, by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India. FGRMN is likely to function shortly with the Indian Council of forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), Dehradun as the controlling authority with two regional stations, namely Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB), Coimbatore and Forest Research Institute (FRI), Dehradun, covering Southern and Northern states of the country respectively (Anandalakshmi and Krishna Kumar, 2012). Various programmes on FGR awareness through trainings at national and international level and workshops were conducted inorder to conceptualise and launch FGRMN at IFGTB.

The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources (SOW-FGR)

The first report on *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources* constitutes a major step in building the information and knowledge base required for action towards better conservation and sustainable management of FGR at national, regional and international levels was prepared by FAO. The publication was prepared based on information provided by 86 countries, outcomes from regional and sub-regional consultations and commissioned thematic studies. It includes:

- an overview of definitions and concepts related to FGR and a review of their value;
- a description of the main drivers of changes;
- the presentation of key emerging technologies;
- an analysis of the current status of FGR conservation, use and related developments;
- recommendations addressing the challenges and needs.

In this endeavour, the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding, Coimbatore, being recognized as national Focal Point for FGRs was assigned the task of preparation of the country report on Forest Genetic Resources for India by FAO. IFGTB, under the leadership of Dr.N.Krishna Kumar, Director, successfully organized the 'Workshop on Preparation of country Report on Forest Genetic Resources (SOW-FGR-FAO)' involving various stakeholders during 7th and 8th February, 2012 at IFGTB and also conducted the meeting with FAO representative, Mr. Albert Nikiema to finalise the draft country report on FGR. The Country report

was submitted to SOW FGR in 2012 and was also published and released by Honourable minister, MoEF & CC in 2012 (Krishna Kumar *et al.,* 2012). The compiled world report on status of FGR was released by Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Rome, 2014.

Conclusion

Today, registration of genetic stocks and elite germplasm need to be encouraged to promote effective germplasm exchange and utilization. Under new IPR regimes, suitable modalities for benefit sharing by both private and public sectors need to be worked out so that continuity of germplasm exchange and synergy between the two sectors is ensured. Moreover, regular awareness generation and knowledge updation about FGRs at various levels including policy makers, scientific community, State Forest Departments, farmers, forest-based industries etc. is essential to gear up better co-ordination, co-operation and implementation of FGRMN activities.

FGRs if not cared and nurtured may result in tremendous change in this era of climate change. The people in the country should take action to safeguard the variety of life on earth through raising awareness of the importance of conserving forest genetic resources for human well-being, promoting understanding its economic value and enhancing public knowledge of the threats to forests. Let us all co-operate in the endeavor of our nation to meet these goals.

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BIRDING – A FORESTERS EXPERIENCE

K. DHANAPAL, DCF (Rtd)

Birding or Bird watching is the trending hobby in the last few years, due to the advent of affordable binoculars, digital cameras, zoom lenses and the social media enable the birder or photographer to display their skills / achievements in many platforms.

Earlier days a good binocular, note book and Field guide were the pre- requisite of a birder. A birder need not be photographer but with the advent of digital technology more gears like camera, and zoom lenses become a must.

My interest in bird watching (term used those days) was triggered by a fascinating bird I saw in Chithar Rubber Division in 1982. That was my first posting as Forest Ranger and I was looking after the construction of Roads and buildings. One day when I was walking along the metal road a white bird with long tail came and perched on a branch. My interest grew up as I never seen such a bird and I was curious to know its name.

Fortunately I found Salim Ali's book in the library and identified the bird as " Indian Paradise Flycatcher". But that interest didn't develop into a hobby due to work pressure and reading habit (no cell phones!).

I had a very good chance to develop the hobby when I was posted in Point Calimere Range during 1994. The rest house called " Poonarai Illam"(Flamingo house) had a huge wooden board hung in the drawing hall with the list of more than 200 bird species found in the Sanctuary. Ironically I was more interested in getting out of that place than watching the Black Bucks and birds. Occasionally I used to watch the Flamingos by wading through the salt water pans with the available video cam.

Finally a real spirit in watching the birds came when my daughter presented a Canon digital camera with a basic 70-300 mm zoom (which is not at all sufficient to click smaller and distant birds) when I was District Forest Officer, Attur Division in 2014, just two years before my retirement. DFO campus in Kattukottai, Attur is a nice complex with some trees and every morning I used to click all bird species and from that point onwards my birding hobby gained momentum. I started looking for new species and observe their behaviour as well. Red vented Bulbuls started nesting in the Rose plant which was just outside my bedroom window. I could watch them feeding the juveniles and surprised to see the parents clean the nest by swallowing the dropping of juveniles so that the scent won't attract predators and ants.

By the time I retired in January 2016, I have seen and clicked as many as 300 species.

Post retirement I settled in Bangalore and started birding in all the surrounding lakes and forest. Bangalore has numerous hotspots and in winter you will see lot of migrants. Then with the vast birding circle in Bangalore it become a daily

routine where I get up early morning 5 am, take my scooty and drive minimum 30 km one way, every day and walk leisurely around the tank bunds and water bodies searching for Lifers (a term used in the birding circle for the birds you yet to see). Come back home, download in the laptop, process and post it FB.

The thrill in seeing a new species (lifers) cannot be explained in words. With more time spent on birding I got to know about more about the terms such as migration, endemic, waders, raptors and so on.

Apart from local birding I used to go north and north east where professional guides are available to show the birds in that region. Northeast states like Assam, West Bengal and Arunachal Pradesh are rich in terms of avifauna.

Then came an app called "eBird" developed by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Carnell University, USA which is quite popular among birders and the app enable in maintaining huge database about avifauna worldwide.

Anybody can download the app in their smartphone and enter the sightings whenever they go for birding. I started using the app from 2018 onwards to till date. It helps you finding nearby hotspots, list of species seen in a hotspot and so on. I shall elaborate on how eBird and citizen science helps in assessment of status of birds in our country or region, in my next chapter.

Birding is a healthy hobby, as you orient yourself with nature and it makes your mind and body healthy and fit. Birding is addictive and costly hobby as well if you are interested in clicking the bird. I have covered 18 states in India, seen 824 bird species within India and more than 1019 species altogether worldwide till date. India has a rich avifauna with over 1361 species recorded so far.

With more than 10000 species worldwide, Columbia ranks first (1920 species) and India ranks eighth (1361 species) and my ambition is to cross the 1000 mark within India.

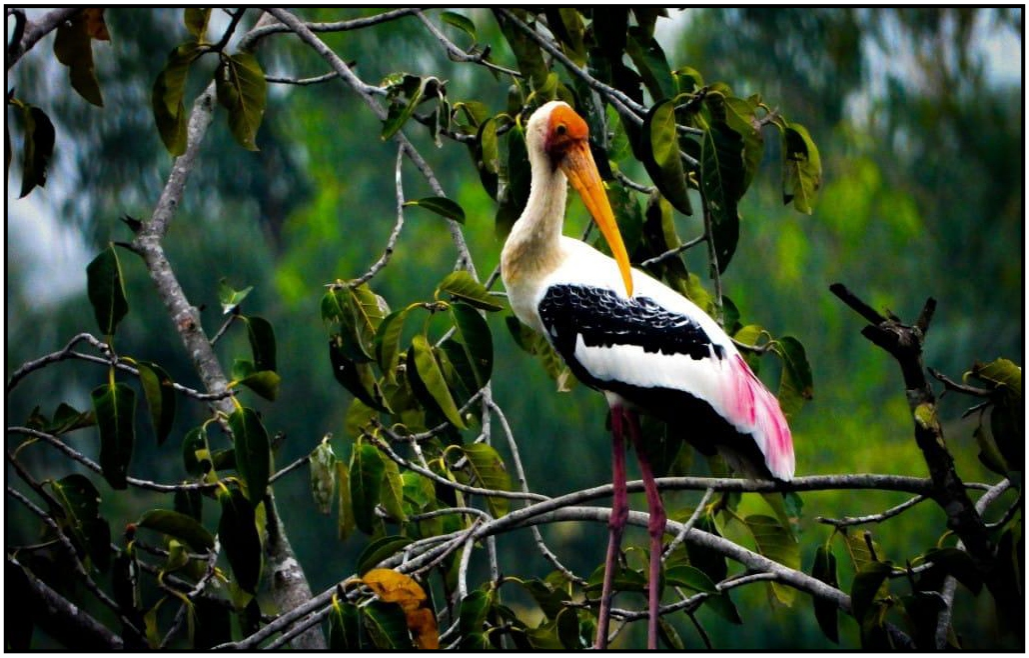
Nilgiri Flycatcher (Eumyias albicaudatus) / Clicked by K.Dhanapal

Nilgiri Sholakili (Sholicola major) Endangered species, Photo: K.Dhanapal

Velvet fronted Nuthatch (Sittafrontalis) Photo : K.Dhanapal

Indian Paradise Flycatcher (Terpsiphone paradisi) Photo : K.Dhanapal

Red Avadavat / Red Munial / Strawberry Finch
Photo : K.Dhanapal



Painted Stork, a near Threatened Species Photo : K.Dhanapal

GUDIYAM CAVES

G. Sivagurunathan, ACF (Rtd)

During my tenure as Forest Ranger, Tiruvallur, like all other Range Officers in the division, used to undertake frequent perambulation of my Range to prevent illicit cutting of red sander trees and earth removal. On one such trip my field staff took me to a stunning prehistoric megalithic site namely the Gudiyam caves. The Gudiyam Caves are located in the Pulikundram Reserved Forests of Allikulli hills, controlled by neighbouring Red Hills Range, located 15 km from the Poondi reservoir of Tiruvallur district.

These enchanting cave system lured me many times to trek and explore them by myself and also along with my officers, on several occasions. The trekking in the Eastern Ghats is difficult when compared with Western Ghats, because of the boulders and the scorching sun effect, due to the less vegetation. There is no shadow in the hills normally.

PANORAMIC VIEW OF GUDIYAM HILLS

FIRST CAVE IN GUDIYAM HILLS

BIGGEST CAVE IN GUDIUM

Local people from nearby villages are coming to worship their deity, locally known as "Manachiamman Koil," which is located inside the Pulikundram Reserved Forests, near Gudiyam Caves. They are mostly unaware of the historical importance of the caves. They believe that those who stack the available stones one on top of the other will soon be able to build their own house. As a result, more rock heaves are visible in this cave, near the temple. The majority of our team members were also involved in stone heaping.

HONEY COMBS ARE SEEN IN THE ROCKS

ROCK SHELTERS

The Gudiyam caves or rock shelters were the abode of the Palaeolithic man. The site was excavated and studied by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1963-64. It is a known fact that millions of years ago, man lived in the caves, some sixteen caves are identified in the Gudiyam cave complex, by the Archaeological Survey of India. Too many stone tools are found in these cave complexes which were used by the Palaeolithic man for hunting their food.

Protection of the caves

The place is an indication of the extensive movement of early hominids about 200,000 years ago. British geologist Robert Bruce Foote was the first to discover the caves. This important place is under the control of the forest department and gets the best protection. Such pre-historic caves endorses the ethnic, traditional and cultural richness of the state.

SMALL CAVE FROM THE DISTANCE

A BARREN HILL TOP ABOVE THE CAVES

OFFERING AT MANACHI AMMAN KOIL

Tamil Nadu-A forerunner on Climate Change Initiative.

V.Sundararaju.IFS, Former Deputy Conservator of Forests,

Tamil Nadu is the forerunner on climate change initiatives. The State has announced three major missions namely Climate Change, Biodiversity Conservation & Greening, and Wetlands. Necessary budget provisions have been provided. The Tamil Nadu Government signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for climate change response through greening project in March this year 2023.

The Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Conservation and Greening Project (TBGP) aims at climate change response, with an outlay of Rs.920.52 crores. The project will be implemented over a period of eight years. The major objective of the project will be mitigating climate change through improvement of ecosystems combined with socio-economic development. The current forest cover in Tamil Nadu is 23.9 per cent, of which 20.27 per cent is the protected area comprising five national parks, 33 wildlife sanctuaries and two conservation reserves. The remaining 3.63 per cent will be the tree cover outside the forest area.

The TBGP aims to achieve 33 per cent forest and tree cover by 2031. The state can achieve this target by planting 350 million seedlings in another 10 years. The planting of the saplings has to be taken up outside the forest area. This mission can thus be achieved by planting saplings in selected schools, institutions, highways, parks and other public places with the coordination of all the line departments.

Multi-pronged approach:

The Tamil Nadu government has set up district climate change missions in all 38 districts. Each Mission is to be headed by the concerned district collector as mission director. The concerned district forest officers will function as climate officers.

The missions will be working for developing strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote eco-friendly technologies like solar and wind energy technologies and e-vehicles.

The local communities will be educated to manage the climate change through development of green models. There is a plan for creating green parks in 100 villages.

The collectors are responsible for preparing district-level climate change mitigation and climate-resilient development plans. They will also establish bio-shields in the coastal areas in addition to strengthening climate smart villages.

An amount of Rs.3.80 crore has been sanctioned for 38 district missions which will be supervised by the Tamil Nadu Climate Change Mission.

The Tamil Nadu Green Climate Company, a special purpose vehicle has been formed to manage Tamil Nadu Climate Change Mission, Green Tamil Nadu Mission and Tamil Nadu Wetlands Mission.

The state government has taken some significant initiatives towards mitigation of climate change recently.

A Dugong that got entangled in fisher's net is rescued and released in Palk Strait

- The establishment of first Dugong Conservation Reserve spread over 448 square kilometers in Palk Bay covering the coastal waters of Thanjavur and Pudukkottai districts.
- Nanjarayan Bird Sanctuary covering an extent of 125.87 hectares in Tirupur district.
- Kadavur Slender Loris Sanctuary covering an area of 11,806 hectares in Dindigul and Karur districts.
- An Elephant Reserve in Agasthiyamalai with an area of 1,19,748.26 hectares in the districts of Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari.
- The declaration of Kazhuveli Bird Sanctuary in Villupuram district.
- The establishment of a Botanical Garden at the cost of Rs.300 crore in Chengalpet district in an extent of 138 ha in collaboration with Kew Botanical Garden, London.
- The establishment of Arittapatty Biodiversity Heritage site in Madurai.
- The declaration of Cauvery South Wildlife Sanctuary combining Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri districts.

The establishment of Nilgiri Tahr Conservation Project at the cost of Rs.25 crore.

The Government of Tamil Nadu recently has constituted the State-level Committee for Vulture Conservation (SLCVC) for implementing the Action Plan for Vulture Conservation (APVC).

A record number of bird sanctuaries, biosphere reserves, mangrove forests, marshlands, wetland complexes and conservation reserves have been declared as Ramsar Sites because of the planned initiative and earnest efforts of the state government.

The Ramsar Convention of Wetlands of international importance is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.

Tamil Nadu stands first in India with 14 Ramsar Sites to its credit:

- Chitrangudi Bird Sancuary.
- Gulf of Mannar Marine Biosphere Reserve.
- Kanjirankulam Bird Sanctuary.
- Karikili Bird Sanctuary.
- Koonthankulam Bird Sanctuary.
- Pallikaranai Marsh Land.
- Pichavaram Mangroves.
- Point Calimere Wildlife and Bird Sanctuary.
- Suchindram-Theroor-Manakudy Conservation Reserve.
- Udhayamarthandapuram Bird Sanctuary.
- Vaduvur Bird Sanctuary.
- Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary.
- Vellode bird Sanctuary.
- Vembanur Wetland Complex.

The Ramsar list is declared with the aim of 'developing and maintaining an international network of wetlands for the conservation of global biodiversity and sustained human life through maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits'.

Tamil Nadu has also set up a Governing Council on Climate Change under the Chairmanship of Honorable Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu including cabinet ministers, administrators, subject matter specialist and eminent persons. The Governing Council will meet once in three months and decide its own modalities in connection with mitigation activities. The Tamil Nadu government has thus become the forerunner in taking earnest measures to mitigate climate change.

OLD TREE

Standing underneath a 200 year old Salvadora persica tree
Photo by : V. Sundararaju, IFS, DCF (Rtd) Date : 13.10.2023
Can you send such current photos of very old living trees of interest ?

A tryst with Pacahamalai Tribal Hamlet- Mayambadi

G.Chandrasekaran, DCF (Rtd)

Three decades ago, in the month of May 1993, I was posted as Range officer, Thammapatti Range, Attur division, Salem Circle by recommendation of the then DFO, V.Prabhakaran, IFS., by PCCF, Mr Harikrishnan, IFS. I am grateful to them for this posting as I was given an opportunity to serve the most deserving Tribal people of Mayambadi Hamlet in Pachamalai Hills.

I was working at that time in Attur division's Karumanthurai Range as Range officer. One evening in the month of May 1993, DFO, Mr V. Prabhakaran, IFS called me to meet him at his office in Attur and come with a few days camp requisites. I was surprised on reaching Attur division office when DFO, took me to Thammapatti range and asked me to assume charge!. I did so. Next day only I received formal orders!

To control ever present sandalwood smuggling, I used to trek often in to Pachamali hills as there was no road facility to many hamlets on the Pachamalai Hills, including the Mayambadi Tribal hamlet.

I used to trek with my staff for 3 to 4 hours to reach this tribal settlement Mayambadi, located in the north-west part of the Pachamalai hills. A picturesque locality in a highly undulating terrain. It was comparatively a big tribal settlement having a population of 300 at that time. Agriculture and cattle rearing was their main occupation apart from assisting Forest department in Sandalwood extraction and other forestry works.

Mayambadi village as on October 2023
Photo by: Barathi Kannan, FG, Belur south beat

The parapet wall constructed 30 years before standing the test of time.
Photo by: Barathi Kannan, FG, Belur south beat

Mayambadi Village Well Pachamalai
Photo by: Barathi Kannan, FG, Belur south beat

It is noteworthy to know that the first Post office for entire Pachamalai hills was established by British Government at this hamlet only. A Forest Rest House was also constructed during British regime. It was abandoned a long time back before I join the Range. Remnants of this rest house are still in place. A symbol of erstwhile British Raj and its extent of reach.

As the sandalwood smuggling was in peak during those days I used to occupy school verandah of Mayampadi School for my brief night stay with staff. Weekly once I used to trek to Mayampadi via two different routes (Foot paths)

In the months of July - August 1993, during one such night halt at Mayampadi, I came to know that there was about 15-20 deaths annually, in this hamlet, due to diarrhea. When I inquired about this,

our staff said it was very common every year during monsoon. The same was confirmed by the villagers. This sad information troubled my mind and I was much worried about the frequent death of the tribal people. Next morning instead of leaving the village I stayed back and discussed this issue with the residents of this hamlet, but could not find a solution. With disappointment, I returned back to my headquarters. This issue occupied my mind every day searching for some remedial measures.

One day during my subsequent field trip to Mayambadi, in December, 1993, I saw a group of tribal ladies washing vessels in a shallow open well and taking water from the well for the household use. I saw the village cattle and pigs also drinking water from the same well. The well had no parapet wall. The depth of the well was only about 3-4 meters. Even during the peak summer, the well was overflowing in those times. Currently the well is still under use although the water is pumped out now.

The well was located below the hamlet. The land was sloping and waste water from the hamlet was flowing down the slope and entering the ground level shallow well. The community was, also rearing pigs in each house hold and they were living with pigs and cattle. The excreta were scattered everywhere. I clearly understood after a brief study that this is the main cause of the calamities they were facing. As the well is located down slope, during the rains, the excreta of these animals were washed down the slope into the well contaminating the well water making it unsuitable for human consumption.

I decided to address this issue by protecting the well from getting polluted. I had a sum of rupees 25000/- (Rupees Twenty Five Thousand only) in Tribal sub-plan towards tribal amenities program. By mobilizing few Village volunteers, we de-silted the well and constructed parapet wall all around the well to stop the contaminated water from the village entering the well.

Since the well was over flowing continuously, we provided 1½" out flow pipe in the parapet wall to release the well water. A platform was constructed to collect well water in pots for domestic purpose without ladies getting in to the well to collect water. We constructed a water trough at about 100 feet from the well to provide drinking water to the cattle. The cattle water trough was connected with well to get water supply from the well.

There after there was no death of people during monsoon due to diarrhea. I was Range officer Thammampatti for more than 3½ years.

It was one of my unforgettable contributions towards tribal welfare during my service. I used the amenities program fund for this work. This work was recognized by the Mayampadi tribes and they helped me a lot in my efforts to protect sandalwood.

Later when we started TAP project we were told to do entry point activity in target villages to win the confidence of the community. I consider this as one of my best Entry point activity.

A dedicated Forester in action for a cause
V. Sambasivam IFS, DCF (Rtd)

The parliament of India enacted the scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forests Rights Act) 2006 and it has been published in the Gazette of India dated 02.01.2007. The main objective of the Act is to give legal right to the Scheduled Tribes whoever is in possession of forest land. The Act also mandates that no action need be taken against the tribal people if certain conditions are satisfied. This Act also included a section of the people as beneficiaries who are stated to be other Traditional Forest Dwellers. The cutoff date as stated in the Bill is altered from 25-10-1980 to 13-12-2005. The extent of land under occupation originally conceived was 2.5 hectares but it is increased to 4 hectares per family.

I was in USA when the Act was passed by the parliament. I came to know about this through Mr. Buchiram Reddy IFS. Mr. Reddy also told me that Mr. Sharma has filed a PIL (Public interest litigation) in Andhra Pradesh High Court challenging the validity of the Act.

On my return from USA, I was unanimously elected as the General Secretary of the newly formed Association, viz. "The Tamil Nadu Association of Senior Professionals of Environment and Forestry" during 2007. As the General Secretary I convened a meeting to discuss various subjects and one of them was to file PIL against Forest Rights Act 2005. The executive committee discussed length and breadth and decided not to file PIL against Forest Rights Act for the main reason that the Association was not having sufficient funds to fight the case in High court and Supreme Court. My boss Mr. K.P.D. Rao CCF (Retd) called me after the meeting and said that I should take up the case not as a General Secretary but as a loyal and dedicated Forester. Immediately I swung into action to file a PIL in the Madras High Court.

I contacted Mr. J.V. Sharma of Hyderabad and discussed about his case filed in the High Court. He gave me the details of the entire history how the Forest Rights Act was initially tabled as bill in the parliament and what all happened in the Joint Parliamentary Committee meeting. The original proposal was to give rights to scheduled tribes living in the Forest over an area of 2.5 ha and cutoff date was fixed 1980. The Short title of the Act originally was "The Scheduled Tribes Forest Right Act" subsequently changed by The Joint Parliamentary committee as

1. The Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006, though other forest dwellers who are in no way connected to Scheduled tribes.
2. The cutoff date has been shifted from 25.10.1980 to 13.12.2005 to include occupations of forest lands dating forward to another quarter of a century.
3. Extent of land on the occupied land has been increased from 2.5 hectares to 4 hectares.

Mr. Sharma is the epitome of dedication, loyalty, commitment and hard work. He is the fundamental pillar for the cause of Forest Conservation and protection. His contribution to the forestry is unparalleled in terms of dedication and service to the forestry.

Mr. Sharma came forward and handed over all documents prepared by him to file PIL in The Honourable High Court, Andhra Pradesh. I have taken up this case as a true forester on my own and filed the PIL in the Honourable High Court, Madras. To my good fortune within three or four sittings the Honourable High Court, Madras passed stay order not to implement the Act in Tamil Nadu. Even though many states have filed the PIL in their respective states even before me, they could not get the Stay order. I got the STAY order only because of Sharma's voluminous record of information and his encouragement. The credit of getting stay order goes to Mr. Sharma only.

Sharma was extremely happy when I conveyed the news about the stay order. Based on this stay order Mr Sharma also got stay order from the Honourable High Court of Andhra Pradesh. Sharma has communicated his Stay order to other states also. The other states also obtained the stay order from the respective Honourable High Courts. After few years almost all High Courts have vacated the stay order except Tamil Nadu.

When I was in USA my case came up for hearing in Madras High Court and my attorney needed vital information to argue the case. I immediately contacted Mr. Sharma and requested him to go over to Chennai and clarify the doubts of my advocate. He has spontaneously agreed to fly from Hyderabad to Chennai at his own expense with a request someone to pick him up from Airport and remain with him till his departure to Hyderabad. My good friend Mr Thambusamy, B.Sc, was kind enough to be with Sharma from landing to emplaning to Hyderabad. In spite of his ill health, he has flown to Chennai and briefed my advocate apart from giving all salient points for arguing the case. When I contacted my advocate, he told me that Mr. Sharma is a gem of a person and gave volume of information about the case for arguing in Madras High Court.

The Tamil Nadu Government pleaded to vacate the stay order citing that stay order of FRA was vacated in all states except Tamil Nadu. The High Court Judge passed an order to submit the list of Beneficial's to the court for further action.

The Tamil Nadu Government has submitted a detailed list of beneficiaries of hill tribes for four Districts to Madras High Court for approval.

The court directed the applicant (Myself) to inspect the areas and submit an affidavit. I have visited three districts along with concerned officials. I have verified all the documents, applications and surveyed sketches. Applications have not been filled in all columns. There were no surveyed sketches. Applications were not placed before the district committee. I submitted a detailed report listing out the irregularities to the Madras High Court.

Tamil Nadu government approached the Supreme Court and pleaded that stay orders was vacated in all states except Tamil Nadu. The Supreme Court vacated Tamil Nadu stay order during 2015 only Mr. Sharma has published more than 100 articles in Vana premi of Hyderabad and Vanavikas of Bengaluru. His article is informative, exhaustive and educative. He has earned high appreciation from eminent persons of forestry.

I wish the Forestry community to recognize his outstanding contribution to the cause of forestry & environment.

I wish him a healthy and long life.

MY SEGUR JOURNEY
V. Jayaprakasam, DCF (Rtd)

On 22nd February 1987, I got a telegram from the Conservator of Forests, Nilgiri Circle with instruction to join at once in Segur Range of Nilgiris North Division, as I was on leave to attend my family function. I was posted to set right the prevailing law and order situation in connection with an elephant poaching case. That time I was Ranger, Forest Protection Squad, Bitherkad under the control of the District Forest Officer, Gudalur Division. Immediately I rushed to Gudalur and met the DFO, Gudulur and informed him about my transfer.

The same day I went to Masinagudi to join duty and when I enquired about the Ranger in charge, I got a cool reply from the office assistant that the Ranger in charge has gone out to inspect an elephant poaching in Masikuli. I was shocked about the warm welcome with an elephant poaching and I came out from the office thinking whether to join or escape from there after applying leave. But as a probationer I cannot enter on leave then I decided to join, whether it is good or bad let us start the journey from here. As a Ranger I didn't have any territorial experience but my Anchetty experience as a Forester helped me a little bit.

After noon I reported to the District Forest Officer, Nilgiris North Division at Ooty, and I realized that the District Forest Officer was a little disappointed on seeing a short, lean personality posted to such a problematic Range, instead of a tall, hefty person to the problematic Range and asked me adding to my utter confusion "what you are going to do there as Ranger?" Gathering some balance, I replied "No Sir, it is Conservator's decision ".

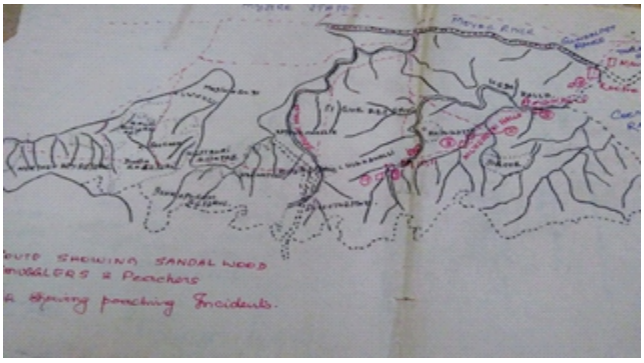
After the meeting I was instructed to arrange for the post-mortem at Masikuli. So my first day started with an elephant post-mortem. Next day I was summoned to meet the Conservator of Forests at Pandalur. During my meeting with the Conservator, I felt encouraged when he consoled me by saying that "I am here, don't worry about any problem".

The next day morning started with a warm welcome note about the poaching of another two huge elephants near Anaikkal Mariamman koil in the Anaikatty river by Veerappan gang. The DFO was upset when I gave the information. Later my plan of action to control poaching convinced my DFO and got good understanding about me and supported me to the core.

Anti poaching Camps:

The extent of the Range was 257 Sq.Km almost equal to Mudumalai Wild life Sanctuary (325 Sq.Km) spread linearly from Pykara falls on the west sharing with Gudauri Division to East upto Atharaipatti nearly 7km from Srioor, between the Northern slope of Nilgiri Hills and Moyar Garge on the North bordering Bandipur . There were two sections Singara and Segur with two Foresters, Five Forest Guards and Forest watchers and in addition 6 APWs.

I have to organise the regular patrolling with the available staff in a planned way and more effectively. I have collected the historical poaching incidents with available offence records. Then I super imposed on the range map (those days only hand drawn maps were available). On analysing the poaching incidents, they occurred only in two streams Anaikatty halla and Mukurthi halla with continuity, mostly between January to April particularly in the evening hours between 4 to 6.00pm. This information helped me to narrow down the problem and I have to organize intensive patrolling during this period more importantly. The discussion with the DFO and Conservator, a Circle level patrolling party was organised on shift basis till end of April.



In continuation of this patrolling , the CF decided to form 5 major Anti-poaching camps in Thengumarada, Mangalapatti, anaikatty, Theppakadu and in Bospara of Mudumalai Range and it is the birth of Antipoaching camps, may be these are first Anti-poaching camps formed in Tamilnadu with 5 wireless sets (HVF). For the stay in Mangalapatti it was decided to take over the abandoned EB quarters for APW camp and it was officially taken over for regular maintenance from EB. Presently STF personals are having possession.

Mangalapatti EB Quarters Photo : V. Jayaprakasam

Mangalapatti EB Quarters

Then slowly I managed with the Range staff on shift basis with three day rotation and they were provided with daily ration due to ingenuity, of course without any official budget allocations. This worked well and to my knowledge there was no poaching in the Range for about 6 years after my transfer. Slowly we organized regular trekking with the Collector (Mr.K.S.Sripathi IAS), Additional Collector (Mr. Ramasundaram IAS) and also they realised ground reality, the problems faced by the field staff and we maintained a good office.

Encounter on record:

During May 1987, an encounter with smugglers led to death of an accused. There was good cooperation and support from all our Officers and from other department to the staff and it was justified by the Government. Till 1987 the forest officials are not empowered to open fire inside the Forests, the CF sent necessary proposal to the Government to empower the FD with firing powers and finally the Government issued orders during 1989.

Closure of Game Reserve:

Game license holders were permitted for game in Segur RF till1987. The routine procedure was that the Wild life warden will issue or renew the game license and after shooting the game, the concerned license holder will report to the Wild life check post at Masinagudi. The concerned territorial Ranger who is having jurisdiction of Segur RF have little chance to know who is entering into the RF or going out. The matter was raised and the wildlife check post was transferred from wildlife Division to Nilgiris North division and shifted to Vazathottam.

It was functioning in a thatched shed and was handled by single Forest Guard who happens to be a tribal. Normally I used to go to Srioor by bike and one day I was sitting on the Segur river bridge near the check post interacting with some locals. Suddenly, I heard a loud and heated argument by a passer with the Forest Guard.

The passer came out from the RF after a raid in a jeep with some foreigners, claiming that he is possessing game license and entailed and had the right to enter into the RF as he likes. I interfered and inquired with the FG and the person and I came to understand that he was a resort owner in Masinagudi. Since I was new and not familiar with Game rules, I sent the man off to solve the situation peacefully. I went back to the office got hold of the game license rules read it thoroughly. Rules were quite clear and I realized that these people are misusing the Game license.

Next day I called the resort owner and explained about the total violation of game license. He was convinced with my explanation and cooperated with the department. Subsequently issue of game license was stopped from 1st January 1988 after a detailed discussion with the higher official as it was in contravention of the Wildlife Protection Act.

Sirioor Water Crisis:

The tribals of Srioor and Anaikatty were suffering with acute water problem from January to June. The Siroor tribals have to travel a long distance to fetch water. We wanted to provide protected water to the Tribals but no budget provision under any Head. Then an idea

Photo : V. Jayaprakasam

spontaneously came with a proposal to a raise nursery under HADP Head, and My DFO accepted the proposal and sanctioned two bore wells for Anaikatty and Siroor with ground level tanks. Normally First impression is the best Impression but I changed it in a positive way to my DFO. Thanks to my Conservator of Forests Mr. V.R. Chitrapu IFS (PCCF Rtd), DFO Mr K.Chidambam IFS, PCCF (Retd) and my ACF Mr V.K.Vadivel, DCF (Retd) who had faith on me. I must be thankful to the then DFOs and Wild life Warden Tvl. Bhawan Singh IFS, S. Ramanathan IFS K.S. Neelakantan IFS, and Thiru C.S. Rangasamy then ACF, FPS, Ooty. my Colleagues Tvl. M. Kaliaperumal, A. Arumugam, Sriganesh, P.A. Abubacker IFS, A. Nagarajan, N. Srinivasan and my field staff.

MEETING ON BIOSPHERE RESERVES

N. Krishna Kumar IFS Rtd.
PCCF and HOFF

UNESCO New Delhi office with Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change had organized a meeting on Biosphere reserves-landscape of hope on 1st and 2nd November at Chennai. The second international day for biosphere reserves is on 3rd November. Ridge to Reef, was a discussion organized to deliberate on issues pertaining to Biosphere reserves in this meeting ie the 10th south and Central Asian biosphere network SACAM country reports on Biosphere reserves were presented, besides roundtable discussions on blue carbon economy, private sectors in support of Biosphere reserves, coastal biosphere reserves youth and women in support of Biosphere reserves, journalists support for Biosphere reserves and success stories.

I talked on Water and Biosphere reserves management with reference to National Biosphere reserves .There was good discussion on Panna biosphere reserve by Dr Ramesh from WII, besides presentations on on Kangchedzonga BR, Gulf of mannar and, Satpura Biosphere reserves. Biosphere reserves definitely face challenges on aspects of management, planning, policies, programs, convergence, capacity building and collaboration issues. It was agreed that there is need for assessment of Biosphere reserves, investments, institution capacity building ,participation ,research knowledge sharing and awareness to strengthen BR systems within the country and globally. Presently there are 18 Biosphere reserves in India,12 designated by UNESCO and 12 only under national legislation. More discussions on Biosphere reserves are needed.

AMAZING WORLD OF BIRDS

K. Dhanapal, DCF (Rtd)

Birds are the most captivating creatures of the animal world and there are about 10000 species found on planet Earth. They are present in all the continents. They are considered to be evolved from Dinosaurs called Theropods.

Let us see some amazing facts about the winged wonders of the world.

- Birds are the only animal with feathers and they have hollow bones and no teeth.
- Penguins and Ostriches are flightless birds- though they have wings.
- Kiwi is the only bird without wings found in New Zealand.
- Ostrich has the distinction of largest bird, with largest eye and lays largest eggs (up to 2.5 kg).
- .Ducks are capable of unihemispheric sleep meaning they can rest effectively one half of their brain while the other half remains active enough to detect small disturbances (www.birdfact.com)
- Birds used to stand on one leg to conserve body heat and energy.
- Albatross, one of the biggest sea bird with longest wingspan can spend years of their lives at sea, without touching the land.
- Peregrine Falcon is the fastest bird with speed 185 miles per hour when diving in the sky.
- Hummingbird is the smallest while Ostrich is the biggest.
- Courtships are longer than copulation. Mostly males are colourful to attract the females.
- Baya, the weaver bird is an excellent architect. Males build their nest meticulously while the female come and inspect the nest and only when the female is satisfied with the construction they start to copulate and lay eggs.
- Owls can rotate their head almost 360 degrees but they cannot move their eye.
- Group of ravens is called “Murder” and group of owls is called “Parliament”.
- Chicken or Egg dispute!! Which came first? According to National Geographic, reptiles were laying eggs thousands of years before chicken appeared. The first chicken came from the egg that was not quite a chicken. So the egg came first.
- Birds are long distant migrants. Forty percent of the bird species migrates in search of food and for breeding in favourable conditions.
- Geese and Vultures are known to fly at an altitude of 29000 to 37000 feet.
- Arctic Tern have one of the longest annual migrations of any animal on earth.Every year they migrate from Arctic circle to Antarctic , a round trip journey of about 30000 km!!!
- Bar-tailed Godwit (a Near Threatened species) has the record of non-stop flight of 7000 miles over nine days.

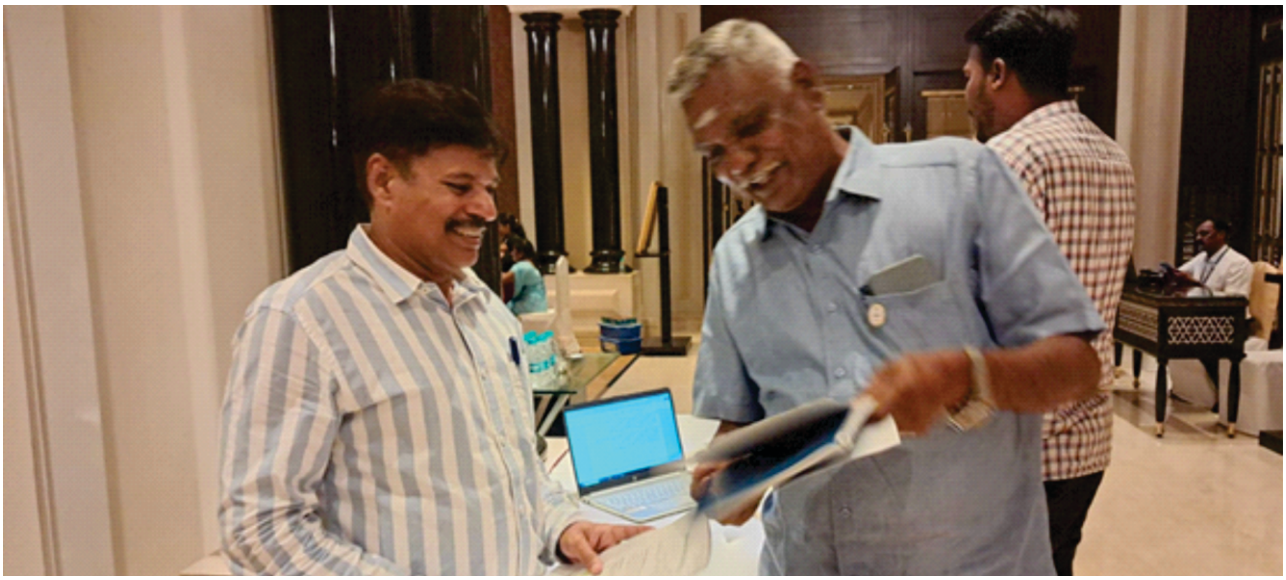
Above all the interesting facts, Birds play significant role in our Eco-system by pollination, disbursing the seeds far and wide and control the population of insects and pests.

Sources

National Geographic, National Audubon Society, Britannica. com, www.reconnectwithnature.org

URBAN GREENING VELACHERY GREEN MISSION

V. Prabhakaran IFS, APCCF (Rtd) & G. Ramprasad AD (Statistics)



Mr Deepak Srivastava, IFS, PCCF
and Green Tamil Nadu Mission Director with Mr Kumararaja, Green Velachery Mission.

Several decades back urban tree planting was a landscape decoration activity with an eye on aesthetics. With migration happening at a mind-boggling pace in the last three decades, our cities and towns have become inhospitable due to rapid environmental degradation and unabated pollution levels. Delhi, as we all know, had to be saved by Supreme Court as even taking decent breath became a luxury. In Urban settings only green vegetation can abate atmospheric and noise pollution. The whole concept of urban greening becomes a lifesaving necessity. Every bit of land needs to be brought under green cover. Government on its part have taken up the task seriously. Tamil Nadu Government gave the thrust to Urban Forestry long back and even created Urban Forestry Division in Chennai. Much of the tree cover now we see in Chennai district are the result of that effort. Yet, more needs to be done with more involvement of people and institutions.

One good and noteworthy initiative is being witnessed in the fast developing Velachery neighbourhood. Thanks to our former General Secretary of TASPEF Thiru V.Prabhakaran IFS (Retd).

As a part of community development project, the Velachery Rotary Club got permission from MRTS/Railways for executing GREEN VELACHERY MISSION in the newly laid Link Road between Perungudi MRTS Station to Velachery MRTS Station. This Road stretch has become very busy and plenty of people use it as walking track. The Vision was to reach planting one lakh trees in a year. It kick started in a small way with planting 100 saplings on 22nd April 2021 (World Earth Day) Now with the enthusiastic involvement of public and institutions as on October 2023 over 25000 Tree saplings have been planted and protected and

marching confidently on towards reaching the mission of one lakh trees. There is immense public and institutions participation in this green movement and needs to be supported further.

Green Velachery Mission's efforts were recognised and appreciated by Mr Deepak Srivastava IFS, PCCF and Director, Green Tamil Nadu Mission recently.

Highlights

2000 flowering plants were planted in centre median with support of Greater Chennai Corporation and Highway Department. Further they have planted over 10000 palm nuts planted along the beach shoreline and also in the service road from Perungudi MRTS towards Velachery MRTS Started with 20 volunteers, the Green Velachery Movement has, as on day more than 200 volunteers including students and Residents of Velachery.

Initially watering was done by hiring a tricycle, now a dozen 3000 litre water tanks with connected pipelines along the stretch of 2 kms for are used for regular watering of the plants and the landscape within a fenced area . Water is purchased for regularly watering the plants.

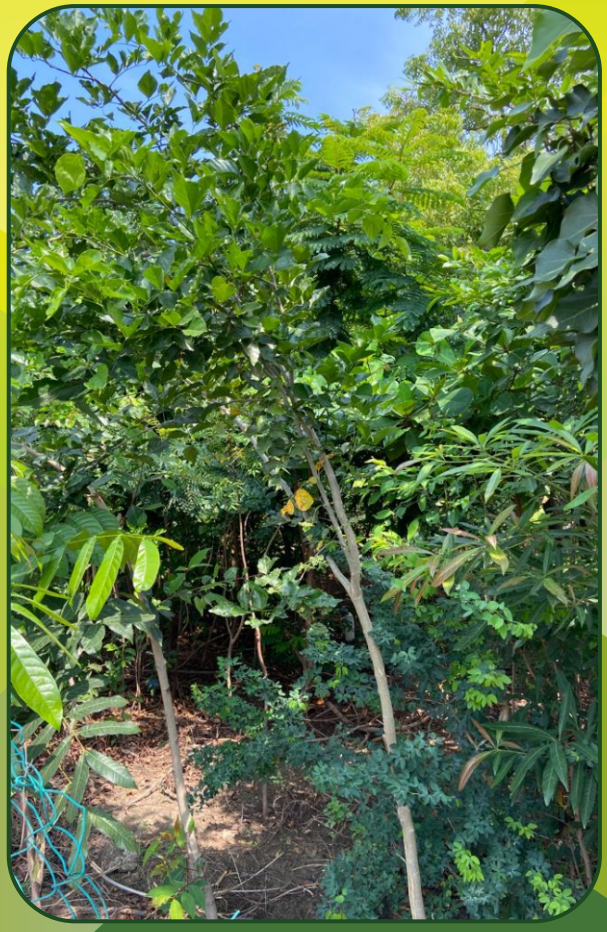
Greening Velachery initiative has received more than ten awards from Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) and TN Government. Officials from GCC and Hon. Minister, Member of Parliament, Member of Legislative Assembly and many Environmentalists have visited and planted saplings with Green Velachery team and appreciated this dedicated initiative .

Many Organizations have come forward supported Green Velachery towards this initiative of green landscape development for environment improvement. Some of these organisations are Ramaniyam builders, Indian Oil Corporation, Numeric UPS, KLA and Coastal Security Group – TN police department etc.

TASPEF appeals to all members to involve themselves in their cities, towns and localities to galvanise urban tree planting activities by synergising the activities with people and institutions. As Forest Professionals with vast experience in tree planting activities we can play a defining role in the Greening activities. Let's all come together to continue this great work for greater cause to provide clean air, ample shade, and abundant water for mankind. We can also get involved with The Green Tamil Nadu Mission, Tamil Nadu Forest Department. TASPEF has hope that our members will do this yeoman service and send success stories with pictures for publication in Namathu Vanam

LET US MAKE TAMIL NADU
A GREEN TAMILNADU

Urban Greening in Velachery



Nilgiri Tahr faces hope for Survival

Sivagurunathan ACF (Rtd)

The Tamilnadu State animal Nilgiri Tahr is an endemic species, spread across Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, Mukuruthi National Park, Periyar national park, Eravikulam national park, Palani hills, Tirunelveli hills and Travancore hills. Most of the Tahr habitat, the grass lands, are located at higher elevations. They are popularly called as varaiattu mottai, which means bald hills of Tahr !.

Nilgiri Tahr, experts say, the species faces genetic erosion due to habitat loss and fragmentation. The males move between different herds to mate. If their movement is restricted or a certain herd gets isolated due to human interference, encroachments etc, chances of breeding drops. Further, the Tahr is also killed for its meat, which is wrongly believed to have medicinal properties. Hunting is completely controlled now. Unlike in the case of tigers and elephants, the census of Nilgiri Tahr is not done simultaneously across Kerala and Tamilnadu. We should protect the valuable diminishing population of Tahr.

The Tamilnadu Government has launched “Project Nilgiri Tahr”, an initiative aimed at conserving and protecting the endangered Nilgiri Tahr species, which gives us hope for increasing the population of Tahrs.

TASPEF welcomes and thanks the Government of Tamil Nadu for this unique initiative.