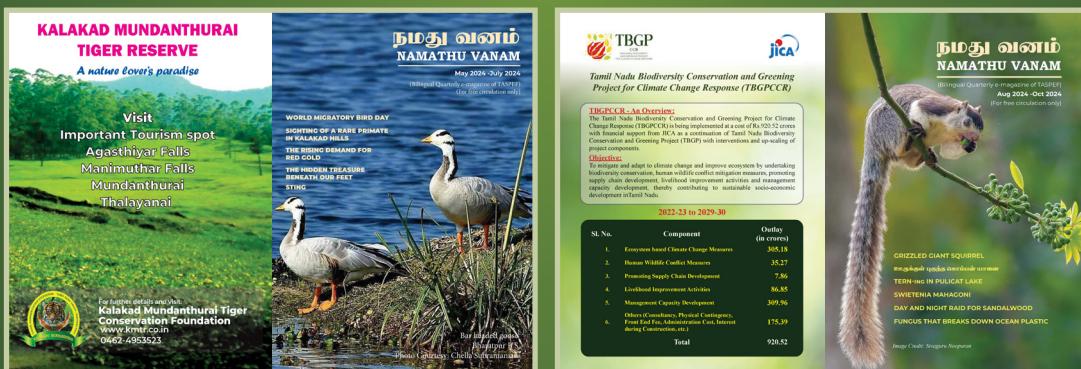


நமது வனம் NAMATHU VANAM

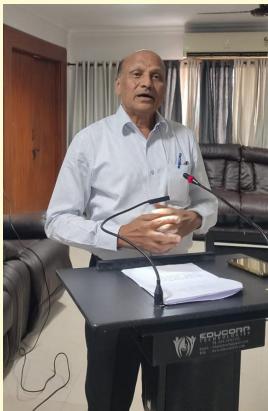
(Bilingual Quarterly e-magazine of TASPEF)
Nov 2024 -Jan 2025
(For free circulation only)



1st YEAR ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

TASPEF Annual General body Meeting

24/09/2024



TASPEF President
Dr V. T. Kandasamy, IFS



Our Chief Guest
Dr T. Sekar, IFS



Guest of Honour
Dr N. Krishnakumar, IFS



General Secretary
Mr D. Arun, IFS



Editor, Namathu Vanam
Mr V. Prabhakaran, IFS



Vice President
Mr P. Ramachandran, ACF



Treasurer
Mr G. Sivagurunathan, ACF



Vote of Thanks
Mr P. Jayabalan, IFS

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



நமது வனம்

Issue No : 7

Namathu Vanam

(Bilingual Quarterly e-magazine of TASPEF)
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Contributions are sent to namathuvanam@gmail.com

Nov 2024 - Jan 2025

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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 2025.

“A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY”

EDITORIAL

We are happy to celebrate the first anniversary of publication of our Namathu Vanam E-magazine. This was made possible by the active support and participation of the editorial board, Executive committee and the honourable members of the TASPEF. On this occasion we would like to bring to all our kind attention, the plight of farmers who had grown tree crops to avoid losses in agriculture and make some wealth by growing trees and consequently, helping the Forests department to achieve its stated goal of covering 33 percent of our geographical area under forests and tree cover.

Over a century of Forest Management in India, the mandate is to prevent Deforestation, Conserving Forests and protection of Ecology and Economic prosperity of the Nation. In recent time Community Participation in safeguarding the ecological and livelihood security of people, of the present and future generations, based on Sustainable Forest Management has become key strategy. The Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), with many Research Institutes and other premiere institutes like Forest Survey of India (FSI), Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), Directorate of Forest Education (DFE), Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA) to name a few, have been playing a crucial lead role in piloting the Union and State Government initiatives. We have witnessed several new ventures like National Afforestation Programme (NAP), the National Mission for a Green India (GIM), and the Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme (FFPM) under Central funding. And the States have also stepped in with several Schemes and Projects with External Assistance to augment the Forest Management of our country. An ambitious goal of bringing one third of our National Geographic Area under Forest and Tree cover has been envisaged in National Forest Policy 1988 and in the subsequent revisions of the policy.

Tamil Nadu has been a pioneering State in introducing many innovative initiatives in effective protection, preventing

deforestation and degradation of forests, conservation of biodiversity, wildlife management and community based approaches in all possible aspects. It may be recalled that as early as 1981 Tamil Nadu Social Forestry (SIDA aided)- arguably the largest Forestry Project in India- envisaged creating Tree Based Assets in Tank beds and community lands. It was implemented highly successfully for over two decades. In addition, much acclaimed JICA assisted Tamil Nadu Afforestation Project (TAP) and Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Conservation and Greening Project were also implemented successfully bringing in many groundbreaking Forest Management concepts. Presently Tamil Nadu Forest Department is implementing JICA assisted *Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Conservation and Greening Project for Climate Change Response with an outlay of Rs.920 Crores.*

Though we have made impressive progress, we are yet to reach the stated goal of 33% tree cover. As per State of Forest Report 2021 the total forest and tree cover of Tamil Nadu is 30843.23 Sq.Km or 23.71% of State Geographical Area (Policy Note 2024-25). In order to galvanize the achievement we have embarked on an accelerated approach to increase the Trees outside the Forests (TOF) via Tree Cultivation in Private Lands (TCPL). From 2007 to 2022-23 totally 1376.54 lakh seedling were planted in farm land over an area of 2.5 lakh hectares (approx.) in about 2 lakh (approx.) farm holdings.(TNFD Information Booklet)

With a noble intention of increasing the Tree Cover of the State Tamil Nadu Forest Department has motivated huge number of farmers to come under Tree Cultivation programme. It has to be noted that the farmers objective was not contributing to Green Cover but to augment their farm income in view of falling return from agricultural crops. They have resorted to planting trees especially commercial species like Teak, Rosewood, Red Sanders and Sandal in anticipation of windfall revenues. Unfortunately, the farmers have been misinformed about the yield and gestation period with unrealistic projection of economics of tree cultivation.

Now, the problems faced by farmers who had implemented this project in their lands with a hope of making some good monetary benefits hangs in balance as neither proper pricing nor market mechanism exists now. Still plethora of procedure have to be adopted to cut, transport and sell the trees especially in respect of Scheduled/Royal timber trees. Grey areas in legal procedures haunt the field staff and farmers alike.

The onus rests with Tamil Nadu Forest Department to introspect and take effective steps to ease the procedure so that the farmers don't face hurdles and harassment. Acts & Rules in vogue have to be revisited, amended or clarified to facilitate hassle free harvesting and easy market mechanisms for the sale of the timber. Otherwise the farmers will shy away from tree cultivation.

Forest Department having promoted Tree Cultivation in Private Lands in a big way, should also focus on the need to address the grievances faced by the farmers to harvest and sell the timber and other species promoted through various Forest Department programmes on their lands. Then only the National Forest Policy Goal of bringing of 33% of our Geographical Area under, Forest and Tree Cover will become meaningful.

Can our members and serving officials suggest some ways and means to the Forest Department?

Will the Tamil Nadu Forest Department focus on this vital issue a little more seriously?

Let us hope for the best.

Warm regards
V.Prabhakaran, IFS (Retd),
Editor,
Namathu Vanam

யാനൈക്കുങ്കാൻ പാംസിക്കൂട്ടം!

വ.കെന്ത്ര രാജാ, മേനാൻ നെൽത്യ വനപ്പണി അലുവലർ,

മനിതരകൾ മട്ടുമ്താன് തമ കുழന്തൈകളുക്കുപ് പാംസിക്കൂട്ടം ഉറുവാക്കി അവര്ക്കുങ്കു നല്ല കല്ലിയുമ് പയിൽച്ചിയുമ് വീഴ്ക മുടിയുമ് എൻപതില്ലെ. അறിവിലേ മനിതരക്കുങ്കു ഇന്നൈയാകക് കരുതപ്പട്ടുമ് യാനൈകൾ പോൻര അറിവു ജീവികളാണ് പിര കാട്ടു വിലങ്കുകളുക്കുമ് ഇതു പോൻര പയിൽച്ചിക്കൂട്ടം ഉറുവാക്കി അവൈക്കണ്ണയുമ് തിരുമ്പട്ടപ് പയിൽറ്റവിക്കമുടിയുമ് എൻപതർക്കു ഒരു ചാൻറ്റാക വിണങ്കുവതുതാൻ ‘ക്രാല്’ (Kraal) എൻറു അമൈക്കപ്പട്ടുമ് ‘യാനൈകൾ പയിൽച്ചിക്കൂട്ടം’. ഇത്തന്നെ ‘യാനൈകൾ പാംസിക്കൂട്ടം’ എൻറു അമൈപ്പതു ചാലപ്പൊറുത്തമാനതാകവേ ഇരുക്കുമ്. അപ്പടിപ്പട്ട ഒരു യാനൈകൾ പാംസിക്കൂട്ടത്തെപ് പർഹി അറിന്തുകൊണ്ടിരിയാവരുക്കുമ് ആവല് ഇരുക്കുത്താനേ ചെയ്യും.

കോട്ടനാടു, കേരള മാനീലത്തിലുണ്ടാ എൻഡാകുണമ് മാവട്ടത്തിലെ കൊച്ചിയിലിരുന്തു 42 കിലോ മീറ്റർ തൂരത്തിലെ പെരിയാർ നദിയിൽ തെൻ കരയിലെ അമൈന്തുണ്ടാതു. 1895 ആമും ആണ്ടു വാക്കിലേയേ കേരളാവിലുണ്ടാ മലൈയാട്ടുരു കാപ്പടക്ക കാടുകൾിലെ യാനൈകൾ പിടിക്കപ്പട്ടു, അപ്പടി പിടിക്കപ്പട്ട യാനൈകളുക്കുപ് പയിൽച്ചി അണിപ്പതർക്കാക അന്ത ചമയത്തിലെ, ‘Krall’ എൻപപട്ടുമ് യാനൈകൾ പയിൽച്ചിക്കൂട്ടം ഇങ്കേ ഉറുവാക്കപ്പട്ടതു. അരുകാമൈയിലുണ്ടാ കാടുകൾിലെ പിടിക്കപ്പട്ടുമ് യാനൈകളുക്കു ഇങ്കുണ്ടാ യാനൈകൾ പയിൽച്ചിക്കൂട്ടത്തിലെ ‘പാപ്പൻ’ എൻറു അമൈക്കപ്പട്ടുമ് പയിൽച്ചി പെറ്റ യാനൈപ്പാകൻകണ്ണകൾക്കെങ്കു പയിൽച്ചി അണിക്കപ്പട്ടു വന്തു. ഇന്ത യാനൈകൾ പയിൽച്ചിക്കൂട്ടത്തിലുതാൻ പിടിപട്ട യാനൈകളുക്കുപ് പലവേരു കട്ടണക്കണ്ണപ് പിൻപற്റുമ് പയിൽച്ചിയുമ്, അതൻ പിൻ കാട്ടുപ്പകുതികൾിലെ തുരൈ ചാർന്ത പണികൾ മരങ്കണ്ണ ഇമുത്തു ചെല്ലുതലു മർത്തുമ് ചമന്തു ചെല്ലുതലു ആകിയ പണിക്കണ്ണകൾ പയിൽച്ചിയുമ് അണിക്കപ്പട്ടതു. ലാറികൾ ചെല്ല മുടിയാത മേനുപാണംകൾിലുമ്, മലൈകൾ ചരിവുകൾിലുമ് യാനൈകൾ മുലമേ പരുമനാന മരത്തടികൾ കടത്തപ്പട്ടണ. അപ്പൊമുതേല്ലാമു കേരളാവിലെ ഇരുന്ത പലവേരു യാനൈകൾ പയിൽച്ചിക്കൂട്ടങ്കൾിലേയേ ഇതുതാൻ മികപ് പെരിയ ഒൻറ്റാക വിണങ്കി വന്തു. ഇപ്പോതു ഇങ്കേ ഉണ്ണാ 6 അരൈകണ്ണകൾക്കെങ്ങന്ത ഇന്ത യാനൈകൾ പയിൽച്ചിക്കൂട്ടമു, പമ്മൈ ക്രാല് ഇരുന്ത അതേ ഇത്തിലെ 1965 ആമും ആണ്ടു രൂ.40,346/ ചെലവിലെ കട്ടപ്പട്ടതു. അതൻ പിരകു 1970 ആമും ആണ്ടു ഇന്തിയ അരസ യാനൈകണ്ണപ് പിടിപ്പതെത്തു തന്നെ ചെയ്ത കാരണത്താലും ഇന്ത ‘Krall’ എൻപപട്ടുമ് യാനൈകൾ പയിൽച്ചിക്കൂട്ടമു, തവരുതലാക ഊരുക്കുണ്ടാ വരുമ് യാനൈക്കുട്ടികളുക്കുമു, പിര യാനൈകളുക്കുമു പയിൽച്ചി അണിക്കപ് പയന്പട്ടതെപ് പട്ടു വരുകിന്നുതു. പമ്മൈ തിരുവിതാംകൂർ മാനീലത്തിലെ ഉറുവാക്കപ്പട്ട ഇന്ത ക്രാല് തறപോതു മിക അരിതാകവേ പയന്പട്ടതെപുകിന്നുതു. മർത്തപടി അപ്പൊമുതു പെരുമൈയുടണ വിണങ്കിയ ഇന്ത ക്രാല് ഇപ്പോതു ഒരു നിന്നൈവും ചിന്നനമാക മട്ടുമേ വിണങ്കി വരുകിന്നുതു. തறപോതു കോട്ടനാടു കുമ്പൽ ചുറ്റുലാത്തലമാക (Eco-tourism Centre) ഇന്തിയ അരസാലു തെരിവു ചെയ്യപ്പട്ടുണ്ടാതു.



കേരളാമലിൽ ഉണ്ടാ കോട്ടനാട്ടിൽ അമൈന്തുണ്ണാ
ധാന്മണകൾ പണ്ണിക്കുപാമ് (Kraal)

ELEPHANT KRAAL
Kodanad was very famous for the Elephant capturing and training. Elephant capturing started in Malayattor Reserved Forests in 1895 and a kraal was erected during that time. Elephant kraal is place where the newly captured Elephants are kept till they are properly trained for employment in forestry works. The present sixroom kraal has been constructed in 1965 at the place where the old-kraal existed. captured Elephants are kept in this kraal till they are properly trained and discipline for forestry and other works. At present, this kraal is sparingly used for training young elephant and is being monument of the once famous elephant capturing and training in Travancore state.

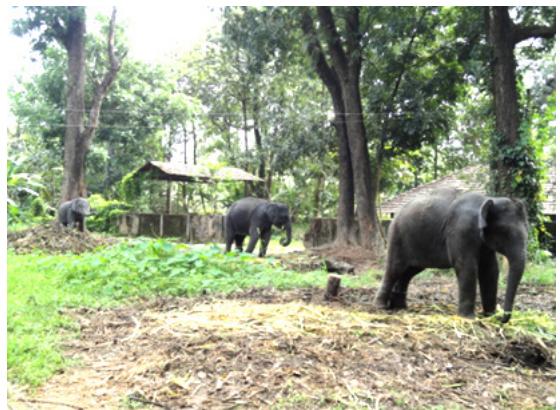
Year:- 1965

cost:-Rs.40.346/-

കോട്ടനാട്ടിൽ വൈക്കപ്പയ്ക്കുണ്ണാ തകവൽ പലക



കേരള മാന്റലം കോട്ടനാടു ധാന്മണകൾ പശ്ചീരു മുകാമ്



കേരള മാന്റലം കോട്ടനാടു ധാന്മണകൾ പശ്ചീരു മുകാമ്

തമിഴ് നാട്ടിലെ ഉണ്ണാ മുതുമല്ലെ പുലികൾ കാപ്പകത്തിലുമ് (Mudumalai Tiger Reserve), ആനമല്ലെ പുലികൾ കാപ്പകത്തിലുമ് (Anamalai Tiger Reserve) ക്രാലിൽ ഇരുക്കിന്നുതു. ഇന്തക്രാലിൽ പൊതുവാക ഇങ്കെല്ലാമുള്ള കുട്ടിയാന്മായെത്ത് തായിടമിരുന്നു പിരിപ്പതർകുപ്പയൻപാട്ടുപാടുകിന്നുതു. കുട്ടി ധാന്മണക്കു സമാർ ഒൻ്റരൈ വയതു ആകുമ്പോതു അതെത്ത് തായിടമിരുന്നു പിരിപ്പാർകൾ. അതാവയ്ക്കു താമ്യ ധാന്മണ അതിനു കുട്ടിക്കുപ്പാലിൽ കൊടുപ്പത്തെ നിരുത്തി, അതു മീണ്ടുമുള്ള കരുവുമുഖ്യമായുള്ള കുട്ടിയാന്മായെത്ത് തായിടമിരുന്നു പിരിത്തുവിട്ടൊര്ക്കൾ.

മുതുമല്ലെ പുലികൾ കാപ്പകത്തിലെ അമൈന്തിരുക്കുമ്പു തെപ്പക്കാടു ധാന്മണകൾ മുകാമിലും ഇപ്പടിപ്പട്ടം ക്രാലിൽ ഒൻ്റരു അമൈക്കപ്പട്ടുണ്ടായെന്നു. കുട്ടിയെത്ത് തായിടമിരുന്നു പിരിപ്പതർകുപ്പു മുൻനാലിൽ, സമാർ ഒരു മാത്രം കാലമിലെ ധാന്മണക്കുന്നുകുപ്പിടിത്തം ഉണ്വാൻ കരുമ്പു, തെന്നണ്ണെ ഒലൈ ആകിയവർഘ്രൈക്ക് ക്രാലിൽ അരുകേ പരപ്പി വൈത്തുക്കു താമ്യ മർഹുമുള്ള കുട്ടി ധാന്മായെ എന്തെങ്കിലും അസ്സമുമിന്നി ക്രാലിൽ അരുകേ ചെന്റരു വരപ്പി പുമ്പകപ്പാട്ടുവാര്ക്കൾ. ഇയൻറ വരെ കുട്ടി ധാന്മണ എവ്വിതു പയമുമിന്നി ക്രാലിന് ഉണ്ണേ ചെന്റരു വരുമ്പട്ടിയാകപ്പെ പുമ്പകപ്പാട്ടുപാടുമുള്ളു.



**முதுமலை புலிகள் காப்பகம் தெப்பக்காபால் உள்ள
'க்ரால்'**

பட்டைகள் மற்றும் காட்டுக் கொடிகளைக் கொண்டு தெப்பக்காபால் உள்ள மற்றும் காலிலூம் கட்டி மாவுத்தர்கள் அதனை இழுத்துக் கொண்டு விரைந்து வேறிடம் சென்று விடுவார்கள். இந்த நிகழ்வினை 'Weaning' என்று ஆங்கிலத்தில் அழைப்பார்கள். சில இடங்களில் இந்திகழ்ச்சியை ஒரு விழா போன்றும் ஏற்பாடு செய்வார்கள். ஏனெனில் இது போன்ற நிகழ்வுகள் நடைபெறுவது மிகவும் அரிதான ஒன்றாகும்.

இப்படித் தாய் யானையிடமிருந்து குட்டி யானையைப் பிரித்து இழுத்துச் செல்லும்போது, இரண்டும் பயங்கரமாக சத்தமிட்டு முரண்டு பிடிக்கும். தாய் மற்றும் குட்டி யானையின் பினிறலும், அலறலும் அந்தக் காட்டுப் பகுதியையே அதிரச் செய்யும். இந்தக் காட்சியைக் காண்பவர்கள் இளகிய மனம் உடையவராக இருப்பின் அவர்களும் நிச்சயமாகக் கண்ணீர் சிந்துவர். இப்படிப் பிரிக்கப்பட்ட தாயும் குட்டியும் சில நாட்களுக்கு உணவு கூட உட்கொள்ளாமலும் இருப்பதுண்டு.

தாயிடமிருந்து பிரிக்கப்பட்ட குட்டி யானை க்ராலில் அடைத்துவைக்கப்பட்டு சுமார் 40 நாட்கள் வரை க்ராலின் இடையே உள்ள இடைவெளியின் மூலம் அதற்கு உணவு வழங்கப்படும். இந்தக் கால கட்டத்தில் அதற்கான பயிற்சியும் வழங்கப்படுகின்றது. பொதுவாகக் குட்டி யானையைப் பழக்குவதற்குக் காவடி என்று அழைக்கப்படுகின்ற உதவியாளர்தான் ஈடுபடுத்தப்படுவார். இவர் மாவுத்தனுக்குத் துணையாக யானையைப் பராமரிப்பதில் செயல்படுவார்.

ஆனைமலை புலிகள் காப்பகத்தில் உள்ள வரகவியார் யானைகள் முகாமில் இப்படிப் பிரிக்கப்படும் தாய் யானை கோழிக்கழுதியில் உள்ள மற்றொரு முகாமிற்கு அழைத்துச் செல்லப்படும். முதுமலை புலிகள் காப்பகத்தில் உள்ள தெப்பக்காடு யானைகள் முகாமில் பிரிக்கப்படும் தாய் யானை அங்கிருந்து 5 கி.மீ தூரத்தில் உள்ள அபயாரண்யம் அருகே மோயார் ஆற்றங்கரையில் அமைந்துள்ள மற்றொரு முகாமிற்குக் கொண்டு செல்லப்படும். சுமார் ஒரு மாத இடைவெளிக்குப் பிறகு தாயும் குட்டியும் ஒன்றையொன்று மறந்துவிடும். மீண்டும் தாயும் குட்டியும் சந்தித்துக் கொண்டால்கூட அவை ஒன்றிடம் ஒன்று பெரிதாகப் பாசம் எதையும் காண்பித்துக் கொள்வதில்லை.

இந்தக் குட்டி யானை 15 நாட்களில் முழுப் பயிற்சி முடித்து பின் க்ராலில் இருந்து வெளியே கொண்டு வரப்படும். இதற்குக் குடற்படியு நீக்க மருந்து கொடுப்பதோடு, தடுப்புசியும் போடப்படும். தினமும் காலை, மாலை நேரங்களில் ஒரு மணி நேரம் பயிற்சி கொடுக்கப்படும். பகல் வேளைகளில் பெரிய யானைகளோடு மேய்ச்சலுக்கு அனுப்பிவைக்கப்படும். இரவு நேரங்களில் சங்கிலிகொண்டு கட்டிவைக்கப்படும். 6 வயது முதல் எல்லா பயிற்சிகளும் கொடுக்கப்பட்டு, அது ஒரு ஒழுக்கமான யானையாகத் திகழும்



ஆனைமலை புஞ்கள் காப்பகம் வரகல்யார் யானைகள் முகம்



க்ராலில் அடையாற்கும் தாஸ்பமருந்து பிரக்கப்பட குடியானை

தமிழ் நாட்டைப் பொறுத்தவரை சுமார் 200 செ.மீ சுற்றுளவுள்ள உறுதியான, நீளமான, உருண்டை அல்லது சதுர வடிவ தேக்கு மரங்கள் க்ரால் உருவாக்கப் பயன்படுகின்றன. அவற்றில் துளையிட்டு, ஒன்றுடன் ஒன்றை இணைத்து சுமார் 40 அடி நீளம், 25 அடி அகலம் மற்றும் 20 அடி உயரம் உள்ள க்ரால் உருவாக்குவார்கள். இதில் 2 அறைகள் அமைக்கப்படும்.

ஒரு சமயம் ‘மக்னா’ (Makhna) என்று அழைக்கப்படும் கொம்பில்லாத ஆண் யானை மனிதர்களைக் கொன்றும் பயிர்களை நாசப்படுத்தியும் தமிழ் நாட்டை ஒட்டிய கேரள எல்லையில் சுற்றித் திரிந்தபோது அதை முதுமலையைச் சேர்ந்த மாவுத்தர்களும் அப்போது பணியாற்றிய யானை மருத்துவர் என்று எல்லோராலும் அழைக்கப்படும் Dr. கிருஷ்ணமூர்த்தி அவர்களும் பிற களப் பணியாளர்களும் இணைந்து வெற்றிகரமாகப் பிடித்து, முறையான பயிற்சியின் மூலம் ஒரு சாதுவான விலங்காக மாற்றிய பெருமை தமிழ் நாடு வனத் துறையையே சாரும்.

அண்மையில் திருவண்ணாமலையில் உளருக்குள் வந்து தொல்லை கொடுத்துக் கொண்டிருந்த 6 யானைகளைப் பிடித்து, அவற்றில் 3 யானைகள் ஆனைமலைக்கும், 3 யானைகள் முதுமலைக்கும் அனுப்பி வைக்கப்பட்டன. முதுமலைக்கு சென்ற 3 யானைகளில் 2 குட்டி யானைகள். ஒன்று சுமார் 20 வயதுள்ள பெண் யானை.

இவற்றை அபயாரண்யம் அருகே மோயார் ஆற்றின் கரையில் யூகலிப்டஸ் மரங்களைக் கொண்டு அமைக்கப்பட்டுள்ள தனித் தனிக் க்ரால்களில் அடைத்து அவற்றிற்குப் பயிற்சி அளிக்கப்பட்டு வருகின்றது. காட்டு யானைகளை இப்படி அடைத்து வைத்து அவற்றிற்குப் பயிற்சி கொடுக்கையில் அவைகள் க்ராலில் உள்ள மரங்களின் மீது மோதும்போது காயம் ஏதும் ஏற்படாமல் இருப்பதற்காகவே இது போன்ற மிருதுவான மரங்கள் பயன்படுத்தப்படுகின்றன. இரண்டு குட்டி யானைகளும் முதுமலைக்கு வந்து சுமார் 3 மாதங்களிலேயே பழகிவிட்டன. ஆனால், 20 வயதுான அந்தப் பெண் யானை இன்னும் சரியாகப் பழக்கத்திற்கு வரவில்லை.

ஆக, பூமியில் வாழும் ஒவ்வொரு உயிரினமும் முறையாகப் பயிற்சி வழங்கப்பட்டால், சிறந்த ஜீவராசியாக விளங்கும் என்பது இதன் மூலம் நிருபணமாகிறது. ●

LEST WE FORGET

**TASPEF pays homage to the Late Foresters who are
now Greening the Heavens.**

“Green Warriors Never Die”



Mr M.S. Parthiban, DCF (Retd)

DOB: 21.03.1959

DOD: 22.08.2024



Mr I. Amalraj, ACF (Retd)

DOB: 25.07.1953

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VISIT TO SUNDARBANS, WEST BENGAL

K. Dhanapal M.Sc,

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In the month of October 2023, one of my birding friends, informed me that he and his family friends have booked one week boat tour in Sundarbans in West Bengal. And since there are some drop outs, he asked me whether I'm willing to join the trip. I was reluctant to go since there won't be much Avifauna in the mangroves. Reading my thoughts in my mind he also suggested that after the Sundarbans, we can visit Bithrakanika and Chilka in Odisha on our way back. This suggestion lured me, since I wanted to see the bird life in the famous lakes of Odisha.

So a plan for two weeks (one for Sundarbans and other for Odisha) was drawn. I suggested flying from Bangalore to Kolkatta, see the Sundarbans and return by train from Kolkatta to Bithrakanika and to Chilka and back to Bangalore.

I flew to Kolkatta from Bangalore

on 3rd January 2024 morning and joined with my friends and started our journey in a Tempo traveller van to Godkhali which is about two hours from Airport. I met the four families who are going to be with me for the next five days and we reached Godkhali around 1 pm, to board the boat, which is the starting point of the Sundarbans tour. I was the only member in the group who has served in the forest department.

Though I didn't work in Mangrove areas, I have visited Muthupet and Pitchavaram on few occasions. But seeing Sundarbans is a special one since its home to World's largest mangrove areas and World Heritage site. As per IUCN Redlist of ecosystems, Indian Sundarbans are considered as "Endangered" since 2020.

Sundarban mangroves cover an area of 10,277 sq.km, of which more

than 60% lies in Bangladesh and the remaining in India. Known for its diverse flora and fauna, Sundarban mangroves has a total of 245 genera and 334 plant species. They also provide habitat to 453 fauna which includes 290 birds, 120 fish, 42 mammals, 35 reptiles and eight amphibian species.



Mangroves in Sundarban

Coming back to our venture into the Sundarbans, there are many boats available in Gadkhali where the boat journey starts. These boats are available for a day trip as well as package tours for three to five days. Boats are equipped with restrooms, kitchen and beds in the lower deck and the upper deck is provided with seating arrangements and dining table.



Tourist boats in Sundarban

The most abundant tree species are sundari (*Heritiera fomes*) and gewa (*Excoecaria agallocha*) and among the mammals the famous Royal Bengal Tiger, are the main attractions in the mangroves.





As we boarded the boat in the noon, lunch was provided hot as we were moving through the lagoon. Our guide was Shri. Mitrunjayan Mandal who hails from the same area and has about 20 years of experience in identifying the flora and fauna in Sundarbans. He gave a wonderful introduction about the mangroves in Hindi and English and started showing different species of flora and fauna then and there.

My first sighting was the Black-capped Kingfisher which is very

common here. By about 6 pm, we returned back to Bijoynagar where we were provided accommodation during our trip. Dinner is served in our resort whereas the breakfast and lunch are provided in the boat itself.



Black-Capped Kingfisher

On 4th January 2024, our second day, we started our trip around 7 am. Our guide was constantly watching in the front and would alert us as soon as he saw any birds or mammals. We were served hot breakfast around 8 AM. On this day we had a very good sighting of Brown-winged Kingfisher (*Pelargopsis amauroptera*) and I was very excited since I saw this bird for the first time (in Birders term its called “lifer”).



Brown-winged Kingfisher is a Near Threatened (NT) species, restricted to coastal habitats such as mangroves and estuaries. In India, they are seen North of the Odisha coast, and Sundarbans in West Bengal.

All along the fringes of mangroves we could see a good number of

Red Junglefowls during our trip. Then, we saw one Lesser Adjutant Stork, Crocodile and spotted deer. Occasional Eurasian Curlew, probing the mud with its long-curved beak was a sight to watch. We could see some Rhesus macaques as well.

On this day, Collared Kingfisher gave some good poses. We all retired in our rooms in the evening after an exhaustive boat ride from morning to evening. In the night our guide showed us the Collared scops Owl on a coconut tree in our resort



Collared Kingfisher

On the third day (5th January) as usual we started our boat journey around 7:30 am and as we were moving, our guide shouted “Buffy fish Owl”. Everybody saw in the direction he pointed where there was a big tree on the banks. Since I was

not able to see anything with the naked eye, I took my binoculars and scanned a particular point the guide showed. To my amazement I saw the Owl deep in the dark branches perching and looking at us. I clicked as many photos as possible and wondered how the guide spotted the owl while moving in a boat. That was a fantastic sighting!



Buffy fish Owl

Our next surprise came after one hour. We saw three “Small-clawed Otter” basking in the sun on the shore, unmindful of our presence.

Within another two hours, came one more special bird (this time I spotted), the fastest on earth “Peregrine Falcon”. Afternoon was dull with the sighting of a Brahminy kite, and a group of Sandpipers. We

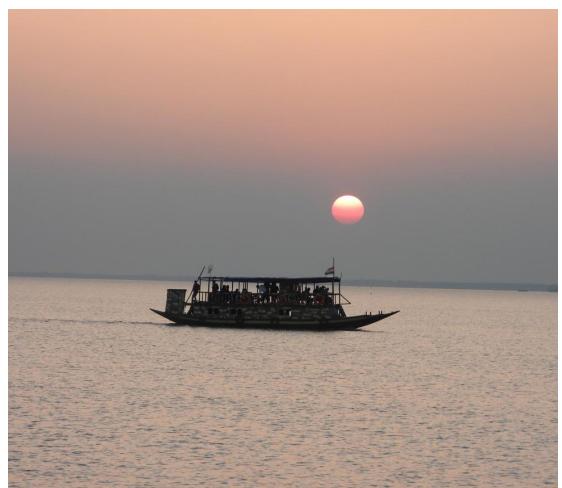
called it a day with the sighting of Jungle Cat while returning to the camp in the evening.



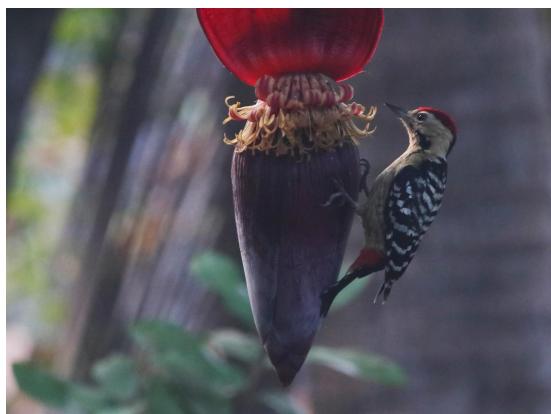
Small-clawed Otter



Jungle Cat



On the fourth day (6th Jan) myself and my friend tried to explore the village side before we start the boat ride and this one hour birding session turned out to be interesting since I got one lifer “ Fulvous breasted Woodpecker” which gave very good pose while feeding on banana flower nectar.



Fulvous breasted Woodpecker

As the early morning session was good, we took it as good omen and started our boat ride around 8am. As usual the Black capped Kingfisher gave good poses and then came Short-toed snake Eagle soaring in the sky lazily scanning the lagoon marshes.

Suddenly our guide gave instruction to the boat skipper to rush in an other direction saying the

apex predator is spotted. Everybody become alert and started watching keenly in the direction, the boat is heading.

There awaited our luck, the majestic Bengal tigress in all its cool and calm composure on the banks. Our joy knew no bounds and I was not able to hold a grip on my camera due to excitement and the gentle swaying of our boat. I tried to hold my breath till I click a proper shot which was seemingly impossible.



Sundarbans Tiger



But the Phooleswari (as the locals call it), unperturbed of the surrounding commotion of sapiens, was enjoying the spongy mud amidst the spikes of prop roots.

Slowly when our boat drifted towards the bank and even with good cellphone people started clicking photos and selfies!!

Upon hearing the news, the boats which were leisurely roaming on other parts of the lagoon came and the crowds' conduct though not new to the tigress, it started retreating back into the thickets of mangroves.

Satisfied with the sighting and not to disturb its privacy, we moved away from the scene and explored some other area. Remaining afternoon was spent by mere talk on how lucky we were to spot a Bengal Tiger in Sundarbans (we were told that this is the first sighting in the past one month) and you can imagine, that we could not speak anything else.

Since the apex predator is seen in close quarters the question now, is whether we should spend the next

day (last day as planned) in the mangroves or we should get back to Kolkatta before noon and do some shopping (ladies choice).

And the answer is obvious !!!



Mr K. Dhanapal, the author is travelling in the boat

Please feel free to send your comments/queries to my email: dhana2323@gmail.com or whatsapp 8660597451. ●

Unveiling the wonders in SMTR- A Must-see Destination

Dr.N. Krishnakumar IFS(R), Former PCCF and HoFF, TN,

Presently Chairman, State Environment Impact Assessment Authority.

I was in Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve (SMTR) recently, in connection with a court case. As the case got adjourned, I decided to see some patches of the SMTR ie., Shenbegathopu and Rajapalayam area of the erstwhile Grizzled squirrel sanctuary areas of the Srivilliputhur. Shri P. Devaraj, IFS, Deputy Director, SMTR shared some interesting information with me on the current management challenges and the innovative ways they were being addressed. I found the Management Plan for this Sanctuary written by the then Wild life Warden Thiru T. K. Ashok Kumar, IFS, very interesting.

SMTR with its own unique features is the 51st Tiger reserve in India and the 5th Tiger Reserve of Tamil Nadu formed as recently as in the year 2021. The Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR), Coimbatore district (erst while Indra Gandhi WLS) in which I had served during mid 1990s and the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) in the Nilgiris, which I had held in additional charge for a very short period also in the 1990s, have their own unique ecological features and identities, that lie in contiguity to SMTR along with Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR) of Kerala.

As I stepped into the forest patches, trekking a while inside Shenbegathopu and

Rajapalayam, I was flooded by memories of my trekking days in the forest. These places are visited by many locals and outsiders with the temples, rivers and streams connecting them to the area. I saw hundreds of pilgrims visiting both these places because of their reverence to the temples, cultures, the rivers and the streams. I noticed that the young and old enjoyed going down these streams primarily for some recreation, followed by the temple visits. I also noticed that all the activities were being ably handled by local Eco Development Committee (EDC). Fortunately, the landscape in these areas have not changed much.

The rivers and the water – connect to conservation:

The rivers and the water flowing from the mountains are probably the best connect to conservation. One cannot imagine the lack of water in these areas and the poor management of the natural resources that could result in disasters. The tiger conservation efforts like in the case of Kalakadu- Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR) have to be strongly based on connecting the water, the rivers and the people for the conservation gains. The three major rivers that run through SMTR are the Vaigai, Suruliyar, and Shanmuganadhi. All these rivers converge at the Vaigai dam. Hence, the SMTR

forms an important catchment for water sources. The SMTR is crisscrossed with several other rivers and streams and canals with strategically located check dams. Some of the important rivers are Arjuna Nadhi, Mudangiyar, Deviyar, Nagariyar, Chittar, Kallar, and Seval periyar. The Mudangiyar river water is a source for Rajapalayam Taluk. These rivers contribute to the agricultural prosperity and ecological security of the area.



Vellar, Vaippar, Thamaraparani river. All flow through the forests.



Trekking along the river course

Forest temples - stay tourist attractions:

The SMTR also has significant tourism because of the temples like Sundara Mahalingam Kovil in Saptur Reserve Forests, which attracts pilgrims during Aadi Amavasai. The Sastha Kovil in Rajapalayam also attracts pilgrims from nearby towns. The Ayyanar Kovil is another attraction. Shenbagathopu Alagar

Kovil, Mangaladevi Kannagi Kovil located at Vannathiparai in borders of SMTR and Periyar Tiger Reserve, Kerala, have their own attraction for tourists and pilgrims.



The Sastha temple in Rajapalayam range.

A Peep in to geographical features of SMTR

SMTR formed in the year 2021 with the recommendation of National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) comprises of 47,803.25 Hectares of Srivillithur Grizzled Giant Squirrel Sanctuary area and 57,793.86 hectares of Megamalai Wildlife Sanctuary in all covering an area of 101657.13 hectares. The core area of SMTR is 64,186.210 hectares and the buffer area is 37,478 hectares. Some important reserve forests covered under the core and buffer areas are reserve forests in Gandamanur, Soolapuram, Elumalai, Vannathiparai, Mayiladumparai, Srivilliputhur, Sethur, Kollankondan and Megamalai etc. SMTR has varied soil types from loamy to alluvial and important rock formations.

Floral and faunal diversity

Trekking through some forest patches and through my conversation with the field staff, I could get a quick grasp of the forest types and vegetation structure. The SMTR vegetation types include west coast tropical evergreen, west coast semi evergreen forest, dry

teak forests, southern mixed deciduous forests, dry grasslands, southern tropical moist mixed deciduous forests, southern secondary mixed deciduous forests, dry deciduous scrub forests, carnatic umbrella thorn forests. Some of the important wildlife are sambar, cheetal, gaur, wild pig, barking deer, elephant, tiger, panther, varieties of reptiles, birds and butterflies.

Forest types and their associate tree species

The West Coast Tropical Evergreen forests consist of trees like *Acrocarpus fraxinifolius*, *Cullenia exarillata*, *Vitex altissima*, *Mangifera indica*, *Bischofia javanica*, *Artocarpus heterophyllus*, *Cinnamomum verum*, *Myristica fragrans*. These forests are located in patches, occur in valleys and the trees are often short.

The West Coast Semi Evergreen Forests occur at lower elevations and the major species are *Hopea parviflora*, *Dalbergia latifolia*, *Filicium decipiens*, *Artocarpus heterophyllus*, *Glycosmis pentaphylla*, *Entada phaseoloides*, etc.

The Dry Teak Forests occurring in patches between 300 to 500 meters are often found in Srivilliputhur.

The Southern Mixed Deciduous Forests consist of *Acacia leucophloea*, *Morinda tinctoria*, *Givotia rottleriformis*, *Terminalia chebula*, *Gmelina asiatica*, *Dodonaea viscosa*.

The Dry Grassland constists of *Anogeissus latifolia*, *Terminalia chebula*, *Pterocarpus marsupium*, *Emblica officinalis*, *Careya arborea*. The grasslands are subjected to annual fires, and are described as savanna types.

The Southern Tropical Moist Mixed Deciduous Forests have clear top storey, second storey, shrubs, scrubs and climbers. The important species are *Pterocarpus marsupium*, *Sterculia villosa*, *Anogeissus latifolia*, *Cycas circinalis*, *Wrightia tinctoria*, *Strobilanthes sp.*, *Lantana sp.*

The Southern Secondary Moist Mixed Deciduous Forest is a degraded forest type due to frequent grazing and fire. The southern mixed deciduous forests are open deciduous forests with the major species being *Pterocarpus marsupium*, *Anogeissus latifolia*, *Emblica officinalis*, *Albizia lebbeck*, *Hardwickia binata*, *Dalbergia latifolia*. The shrubs include *Helicteres isora*, *Carissa carandas*, *Randia dumetorum*, *Dendrocalamus strictus* occurs in scattered patches, The climbers include *Acacia instcia*, *Smilax zeylanica*.



A view of the forest patch in Shenbegathopu



Dry Deciduous forests

The dry deciduous scrub forests with stunted trees include *Chloroxylon swietenia*, *Acacia chundra*, *Zizyphus xyloporus*, *Cassia auriculata*, *Dodonaea viscosa*.

The Carnatic umbrella thorn forests occur in the foothills and plains and the species include *Chloroxylon swietenia*, *Canthium dicocum*, *Gyrocarpus jacquinii*, *Albizia amara*, *Sapindes emarginatus*. The other species include *Zizypus jujuba*, *Randia dumotorum*, *Carissa carandas*, *Helicteres isora*.

Plans to strengthen conservation:

I personally feel that this SMTR may need a distinct conservation plan as it forms an important conduit and migratory pathway linking KMTR, Anamalai Tiger reserve, Periyar Tiger reserve in the Western Ghats. I understand that the NTCA with the Director of the SMTR are into the preparation of the tiger conservation plan for the tract. The core tiger habitat and zonation need distinct zone plans, theme plans for supporting water conservation, eco-tourism, protection of endangered species, habitat improvement, veterinary care including corridor improvement. The SMTR has multitudes of stressors like mining, infrastructure, roads and climate threats within and outside the tiger reserve which needs to be addressed. Short-term and long-term habitat monitoring stations and research should guide the management. The SMTR needs some bench-marked river restoration plans besides plant species restoration measures. The critical Forest Genetic Resources (FGR) zones need to be mapped, marked and monitored for regeneration and other ground status like the health of soils, availability of seeds.



The ECO-shop in Shenbegathopu

The entire tiger landscape of Anamalai Tiger reserve, Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve, Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve and Mudumalai Tiger reserve and Sathaymangalam Tiger Reserve is a great vision of Tamil Nadu Forest Department aimed at the conservation of the Western Ghats. This vast mesmerizing landscape would have otherwise got fragmented but for the dream of connecting them as corridors for conservation of the tigers. Driving through the roads to reach Shenbegathopu and Rajapalayam, I saw the vast stretches of agricultural landscape and could visualize the strength of farmers, the agricultural workers and the grassroots workers who could support conservation efforts, through their connection with the water resources. There is also a need for harnessing the strength of tourists and pilgrims for conservation success. I wish there are more reasons for me to step into the forests as often as possible, to explore new facts and the magic of nature that live within our forests. ●

MANAGING DRC - DRY RUBBER CONTENT AT THE KEERIPARAI RUBBER FACTORY

- A Journey down the memory lane

V. Prabhakaran, IFS Retd,

Former Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Tamil Nadu.

When I landed in Nagarcovil in the year, 1986, to take charge as Factory Manager, Keeriparai Rubber Factory, Arasu Rubber Corporation (ARC), it was my third visit to Nagarcovil. The first visit was, as a BSc., (Agri.), student during All India Tour. The second visit was as a Trainee in SFS college, Coimbatore, when we saw the evergreen movie Alaigal Oivadhu Illai. During all these visits, I had never imagined that, I will be posted to this part of Tamil Nadu, this early in my service.

This was my fourth transfer, after completion of my training period from 1985! First posting to TANTEA, but was not allowed to Join, then 21 days compulsory wait, next posted as Mensuration Officer initially at Madurai then at Coimbatore for about three months, then transferred to Theni as Soil Conservation Officer, Varusha Nadu Soil Conservation Division for about a year. Now, in Keeriparai! Due to these frequent transfers, I was flush with my Transfer Travelling Allowance funds!

Rubber and its history

As we all know, that the natural rubber is harvested in the form of the latex (field latex) from the rubber tree *Hevea brasiliensis*, belonging to a spurge family, Euphorbiaceae. It is a native tree of South America. The field latex is a sticky, milky and white colloid drawn off by making incisions in the bark and collecting the fluid in coconut shells, or plastic cups, in a process called “tapping”. The field latex is then refined into the rubber that is ready for commercial processing. In major areas, latex is allowed to coagulate in the collection cup. The coagulated lumps are collected and processed

into dry forms for sale. Natural rubber is used extensively in many applications and products, either alone or in combination with other materials. Natural rubber has a large stretch ratio and high resilience and is also, waterproof.

The archaeological evidence points to the first use of natural latex from the Hevea tree to the Olmec culture of Mesoamerica. They used rubber for making balls for the Mesoamerican ballgame. Rubber was later used by the Maya and Aztec cultures. Aztecs used rubber, apart from making balls, for making containers and to make textiles waterproof by impregnating them with the latex sap. When the Conquistadors of Spain invaded Aztecs and Mayan civilizations, they found these cultures practiced a sort of ball game, using balls made of natural rubber, where in the looser side players were sacrificed by beheading or by cutting open the chest and removing the heart!. Horrific, indeed!

Introduction of Rubber in India, was initiated by the British planters in 1873, on an experimental basis in Calcutta's Botanical Gardens. But, the first Commercial Rubber plantation was established at Thattekadu in Kerala in 1902. In later years, rubber cultivation was taken up in the states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Today, India is the third largest producer of natural rubber and fourth largest consumer of rubber. Thailand, Malasia, Indonesia and Cambodia are the leading natural rubber producers in the world. (Source: Wikipedia)

Development of rubber plantations in Tamil Nadu

Under British regime many south Indian Tamils were taken to Ceylon to work on Tea plantations and for other works. After Independence, the Ceylon Government wanted to repatriate as many Indians as possible back to India. This resulted in an agreement known as the Srimavo-Shastri Pact or the Indo-Ceylon Agreement and Bandaranaike-Shastri Pact, signed on 30 October 1964. This agreement was signed between the Indian Prime Minister Mr. Lal Bhadur Shastri and Ceylon's Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike. This agreement was also known as "Agreement on Persons of Indian Origin in Ceylon". It was a significant agreement in determining the status and future of people of Indian origin in Ceylon. The central part of the pact was the granting of Ceylonese citizenship to about 300,000 of the Indian population in Sri Lanka, while about 525,000 would be repatriated to India.

Under this pact, to rehabilitate the repatriated Sri Lankan Tamils, rubber and tea plantations were raised in Tamil Nadu using these people's expertise and for giving them livelihood opportunity. Thus, in the Kanyakumari district having suitable conditions for growing rubber, a separate Circle called as "Government Rubber Plantations" (GRP) was formed in the year 1964, with headquarters at Nagarkovil, by the Forest Department. There was a commemorative stone in this regard in Keeriparai's 1964 plantation. I had seen that during my tenure there. Hopefully, I presume, it is still there. Some scenes in the Alaigal Oivadhu Illai movie was shot, here in this plantation.

Later, this Government Rubber Plantations (GRP) was re-named as "Arasu Rubber Corporation" (ARC) on 20-8-1984 with an area of 3985.694 ha. ARC is one of the major natural rubber producers in the country.

My posting place, Arasu Rubber Factory, Keeriparai, is located about 25 Km from ARC, Headquarters at Nagercovil, in Kanyakumari district. After formalities of joining the

Corporation, I reached Keeriparai factory and took charge. I was thrilled with the beauty of the location, lush green forests, crystal clear streams, vast back waters of the Perunchani reservoir and of course, the excellent wildlife population. A wonderful place in short.



Aerial view of the Keeriparai Rubber Factory, ARC

But the factory was in turmoil - labour unrest by two unions, allegations on so many issues, and quality issues in the processed rubber latex (CENEX) and in the sale of Skim rubber, a by-product of CENEX manufacture. Having used rubber only for rubbing off my pencil drawing errors on the paper, I was now, in-charge of rubber production factory and heart of the ARC's economy!

Thanks to the complete cooperation from my three CMDs, Late Mr Padmanaban, IFS, followed by Late Mr J. Wilson IFS and Mr. M. Harikrishnan, IFS, staff and labourers of the Factory and fellow Divisional Managers in ARC, some significant achievements were made during my three and a half years tenure as Factory Manager. Marketing strategy, too, underwent some changes for the better. End result was higher revenue and a cooperative labour force. I received a "Certificate of Merit" from my third Chairman cum Managing Director, Mr. M. Harikrishnan, IFS, along with job satisfaction.

I will take the privilege to highlight only two of a few memorable achievements, which had a direct effect on the financial health of the ARC.

QUALITY OF CENEX (Centrifuged 60% Concentrated Rubber Latex)



Commissioning of rubber smoke house by CMD

*Mr J. Wilson IFS. Mr Baskardass IFS, GM,
standing first from the left*

Rubber latex is collected from rubber trees by making incisions, a skilful job, and collecting the oozing liquid rubber into cups tied to the tree. Natural field Latex coagulates in the cups if kept for long period and must be collected before this happens. The collected latex from rubber trees, the “field latex”, is transferred into air-tight containers, in our case cleaned oil drums, and ammonia gas is infused in to the field latex. This ammonisation process was invented by patent lawyer and vice-president of the United States Rubber Company, Ernest Hopkinson around 1920. Ammonisation preserves the latex in a colloidal state for longer periods of time. Ammoniated Latex is generally processed into latex concentrate or the CENEX, for manufacture of dipped goods like tubes and balloons.

Rubber Latex coming from the sap of the rubber trees consists of tiny particles or globules of rubber that are held suspended in the water medium. By adding ammonia gas in the collected sap or field latex, ammonia acts as a preservative and keeps the rubber particles/globules from coagulating or clumping together before use. The natural rubber latex, tapped from rubber trees in the various divisions of the ARC are transported in steel drums to the Keeriparai factory after infusing required quantity of anti-coagulant ammonia

gas to the given volume of the latex, to prevent it from coagulating in to a solid rubber and the resultant loss in its economic value.

In the factory, using centrifuge machines and adding additional ammonia gas, the natural rubber latex with 25% to 45 % Dry Rubber Content (DRC), is concentrated up to 60% DRC. After adding further quantity of ammonia gas, the concentrated latex (CENEX) is filled in fresh or reconditioned but quality, cleaned and coated steel drums. If the quantity of ammonia transfused in to the latex while being transported or while concentrating and barreling it is not adequate, this will result in increased formation Volatile Fatty Acids and the CENEX will coagulate making it unfit for intended industrial use of producing dipped rubber goods. If the cenex is in liquid form only manufacture of dipped goods like balloons, rubberized coir mats, vehicle tubes, condoms etc is possible.

When I had taken charge, the factory had a stock of over a thousand drums of Cenex. New production was also in full swing. It was my practice to do surprise rounds of the factory. During one such surprise checking, I noticed that freshly filled Cenex drums were being lifted by the merchants and the older Cenex filled drums, in the godown were not being sold, making them still older. The shelf life of Cenex is about 12 months from the date of filling. They will then start coagulating and will become unfit for use.

I issued orders, after obtaining details from the stock register, that the CENEX or any other rubber product must be sold and released, serially, starting from the oldest as per the date of manufacture. All hell broke! Merchants refused to take older drums. Some merchants tried to persuade me to permit them to take delivery of fresh product. On enquiry, the merchants revealed that older Cenex in the drums were already in a partial to fully coagulated stage. On opening a few sample Cenex drums, it was found, Cenex in them was 60 to 70% solidified making them unfit for manufacture of dipped goods. On through enquiry, I was given to understand that this happened due to non-testing or inadequate testing the field latex for its ammonia, DRC and

VFA content, on receipt of the field latex in the factory. This is a mandatory job of the rubber chemist of the factory, which was somehow neglected. This resulted in sub-standard Cenex production and later its coagulation in the drums. If the field latex received from the field is not upto the mark, the field managers have to explain the reasons. If reasons are not satisfactory they are responsible for the loss. Such bad field latex will be diverted for processing into less valuable rubber products like Estate Brown Crepe (EBC). ARC's top management fully backed me in these actions.

Even if the field latex is of perfect quality, while processing the same into Cenex, if adequate ammonisation is lacking or the drums used for filling the Cenex is not properly cleaned and coated with anti-coagulants, the Cenex will coagulate.

It was a period of heightened tension. At this point in time, to fix responsibility to the field or to factory was a dilemma. Unfortunately, with a heavy heart, we had to fix the responsibility on to the factory rubber chemist. However, with hard work, intelligent thinking, use of literature pertaining to rubber processing and use of staff's knowledge we charted a course of action. We engaged services of one, Dr. Muralidharan Nair, a Rubber Technologist from Trivandrum and obtaining relevant literature from Malaysia on rubber processing, we salvaged and reconditioned part of the older Cenex. Which could not be reconditioned were milled and converted them in to other forms of dry rubber like crepe rubber. This process was costly and time consuming.

First, we tightened the field latex ammonisation to the correct quantity by strict checking of the incoming field latex for its ammonia content, DRC and VFA content. Rubber chemist was sent to field test ammonia content in the latex at source randomly. Only quality field latex was used for processing into Cenex. Sub-standard latex was diverted for processing into EBC. A losing proposition. Then, inadequacies in factory processing were identified. Dr. Muralidharan Nair, found that mixing of ammonia into Cenex was not upto the mark, though huge quantities of ammonia was used. This was due to the manual stirring

of the Cenex to mix the ammonia in to it. A simple stirring machine was fabricated and was electrically operated constantly stirring the Cenex while ammonia was passed into it. This enabled proper mixing of ammonia into the latex. All this was possible due to unwavering support from CMDs and General Managers of ARC.

With the top management's support and staff cooperation, we were able to identify the other deficiencies at all levels, like in the procurement of ammonia cylinders, steel drums for filling both field latex and Cenex , ensuring timely delivery of field latex to the factory, proper stock register etc and rectified them. I was given all the liberty to visit other rubber factories, within and outside the state, to timely repair and maintenance of machines. When short of labourers, I was given preference to secure required labour from field divisions. All these measures and support resulted in about six months' time, we were manufacturing quality CENEX. Subsequently, we are able to obtain ISI certification for quality for our Cenex for the first time, since the inception of the rubber factory in the early sixties. ISI certification means, that our Cenex is in the prescribed quality as determined by the Rubber Board, Govt of India.

All the credit for this achievement goes to the labourers, staff and officers in the divisions and in the headquarters, who supported, gave complete cooperation and made this achievement possible. By this effort ARC realised substantial revenue and reduced losses. Recognition and appreciations were accorded to me, including the Merit Certificate mentioned above. These efforts are still fresh in my memory! Good old days!

I was happy to see the latex mixing machine we had introduced in those days, still functioning and used in the Cenex factory, Keeriparai on my visit to the factory in early 2021.

LABOUR LAW - Land Mark judgement obtained

Mr. K. Ranganathan, B.Sc., B. L., Industrial Relation Officer (IRO), ARC was an exceptionally devoted officer in -charge

of Labour management. He was to assist ARC divisions in resolving labour disputes. In the Keeriparai rubber factory we were manufacturing CENEX, smoke cured RMA rubber sheets, shade dried Estate Brown Crepe (EBC), Pale Latex Crepe (PLC) rubber and skim rubber sheets.



**RMA Rubber sheets being sent into smoke house by
CMD and GM, ARC**

Natural rubber latex collected from the field, mainly for Keeriparai division which is the nearest division to the factory, is brought to factory without ammonisation. This fresh latex, after testing for DRC, based on which only labourers are paid, is poured into specially designed rectangle steel containers with 5M x 1M x 1M size, with provision for inserting steel plates at one inch distance from each other. The latex is coagulated under controlled, clean conditions using formic acid. The coagulated latex is then mechanically pressed in to Sheets of rubber and smoke dried in specially constructed smoke chambers. Fire wood smoke is used for this purpose.

The finish product is honey coloured and translucent. These are called Ribbed Smoke Sheet grades, commercially called as RMA (Rubber Manufacturers Association) grade rubber. Based on Colour, absence of impurities, tensile strength etc., these sheets are graded as RMA1, 2 etc. RMA 1 sheets fetching highest price, while RMA 2 etc fetch proportionately less price. The naturally coagulated rubber (cup lump) is milled into Estate Brown Crepe (EBC) grade rubbers.

There was a norm that each labour has to bundle a given number of 25 kg bundles of RMA sheets in an eight-hour shift. Individual single rubber sheets are to be piled on one another, after coating with chalk powder to prevent them from sticking together, till they reach 25 kgs weight and bundle them by applying pressure. Such 25 kg RMA rubber bundles only are sold on orders from head quarters.

During a course of routine inspection of all sections of the factory, I noticed, the labourers were idling in the RMA bundle making section. Coming back to administrative office, on due verification of records, it was noticed that there was a shortfall in production of RMA bundles. Also, the freshly manufactured rubber sheets were piling up and were not being bundled as fast as the new RMA sheets arriving in the godown. The Forester in charge of the bundling section, simply asked for additional labourers to speed up the bundling work!

On proper examination, it was found that if I, increased the labourers for bundling, cost of production goes up. At the current rate of bundling output, we were incurring loss. On verification of past records of production and instructions in this regard, we found that the labourers were under performing. Talks with them failed and the unions started to make an issue of it and were not interested in increasing the bundle output as per norms with in the stipulated eight hours of work.

As a last resort, I reduced the wages and paid wages, proportionate to the quantity of work done, by the labourers. This was objected by the labourers and the matter went to the

appropriate labour forum as litigation. The ‘Genius’ Mr K. Ranganathan, IRO, took the challenge, conducted the case and won the case by obtaining a land mark order, upholding my decision of paying wages proportionate to the work done.

The ‘Genius’ word is used to describe Mr. K. Ranganathan, IRO, was of because of how he handled the litigation. The Labour forum while hearing the arguments, said that my orders of reducing the wages as per work done was illegal and not sustainable under Labour Laws and the management should pay wages in full including reimbursement of part of the wages deducted. Mr K. Ranganathan argued saying that management did not do the deduction of wages but undertook only proportionate reduction of wages according to the short fall in work in an eight-hour shift, as per established work norms. Finally, after much deliberation, the Labour Forum upheld my orders of proportionate reduction of the wages.

This order enabled the sustained rubber production as per norms and restored normalcy in the factory and saved huge amounts in the cost of wages. Cost of production came down and profits were restored. Entire credit for this achievement is due to Mr.K. Ranganathan, ARC’s Industrial Relations Officer.

Thus, looking back with pride, I feel that, it is possible to win over all situations, as a team leader, in any situation, if we are impartial in our dealings, harness support of staff and observe on the spot, issues that are causing problems or obstacles and seek solutions within or from outside help.



*Independence Day Flag hoisting by
Mr J. Wilson IFS, CMD, ARC*

I take this opportunity to remember, all the three Chairman and Managing Directors, two General Managers, several divisional Managers, technicians, the staff in the factory, including the labourers. I offer my salutes for their contribution, support and cooperation for my productive and memorable tenure as Keeriparai Rubber Factory Manager.

(This article is reproduced with courtesy from Annual Memoirs of Sylvan Club, Chennai 2024) ●

Arasu Rubber Corporation in a nutshell

Arasu Rubber Corporation is a Government of Tamil Nadu Company functioning under the Department of Environment & Forests. The Company was registered on 20-8-1984. The objective of the Corporation is to provide employment to the locals of Kanyakumari District and adopting the repatriates from Sri Lanka. The Corporation is ISO 9001:2015 Certified. The main activity of the Corporation is to produce natural rubber and selling as raw rubber to the consumers after processing. The entire area of 3985.694 ha. is within Kanyakumari District as this is the only suitable district for the growth of rubber in the State.

ARC produce around 1500 tonnes of natural rubber per year including Cenex having ISI standard.

India is the third largest producer of natural rubber with an annual production of 640,000 tonnes while Thailand producing 2,615,000 tonnes followed by Indonesia 1,630,000 tonnes per annum. In the Indian production, Kerala contributes to 85%, Tamil Nadu 4% followed by Tripura, etc..

The Corporation is one of largest employment provider in the Kanyakumari district.

The present price of Cenex is Rs 134.20. ●

MARINE ECO-SYSTEM CONSERVATION

Dr.S.DAVIDRAJ MA,M.Sc,MBA,Ph.D,BL
Former ACF, Tamilnadu



Marine Eco-system

Marine ecosystems cover approximately 75% of the Earth's surface and are undoubtedly vital for planetary functioning. These may be broadly classified as shared coral reefs, estuaries, mangroves, seagrass beds, and oceans—all serve as hotspots for biodiversity, regulation of climate change, and providing resources like food that help humans survive. Besides these enormous importance of marine ecosystems, overfishing, pollution, habitat-destructing activities, and climate change are burdening with great pressures on these systems due to the direct effects of human activities. Thus, conservation of marine ecosystems is imperative for the conservation of better marine life and sustained exploitation of resources. The exploitation benefits human beings in terms of food and economy as well as the maintenance of ecological equanimity.

The article therefore highlights the timely problem of marine ecosystems, why they are so important, the challenges they face, and the modern conservation measures necessary for the safeguarding of such inconceivable systems for the future.

Diversity: Many organisms call an ocean home—from the tiny plankton to the most massive whales. The coral reef has been called the “rainforests of the sea”; it covers almost less than one percent of the ocean floor but is home to approximately 25 percent of all marine species. If ecosystems of oceans are healthy, they would shape the sustainability of not only the marine ecosystems but also including those on land.

Carbon Sequestration: Oceans are also the carbon sinks. They store huge quantities of carbon, by absorbing carbon from the atmosphere and thereby reducing greenhouse effects of the carbon in the atmosphere.

Economic and Social Value: Marine ecosystems offer a wide spectrum of the livelihood options to worldwide. These livelihood options include fishery resources, tourism, shipping, and energy generation. Annual global economic valuation of oceans is pegged at an estimated \$2.5 trillion, amplifying their relevance to the world's economy.

Climate Control: In addition to that, the oceans play a vital role in regulating temperatures and weather. They absorb solar heat from the sun and redistributes the energy worldwide through oceanic currents that cause variations to the pattern of the systems and the overall global climate.

Threats to Marine Ecosystems: Marine ecosystems face some high-order threats that mostly arise from human exploitation. Unless addressed, these threats are likely to force marine biodiversity and all the services it provides into an irremediable crisis.

Overfishing: One of the most significant threats that eventually culminates in stock depletion, disruption of food chains, and chronic instability in marine ecosystems is overfishing. Also, unsustainable fishing techniques such as trawling and large nets can potentially maraud the corals and sea floors. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports more than one-third of the world's fish stocks as over exploited. This eventually leads to a reduction of population numbers of some targeted species and animbalance within different ecosystems.

Pollution: The very biggest threat to marine life comes probably from marine pollution in its various guises, including plastics, oil spills, agricultural run-off, and other chemicals. Every year, a million tons of plastic waste end up in the oceans. Plastic waste in the ocean will kill marine life and destroy these sensitive habitats. Agricultural run-off fertilizers pose acute risks of algal blooms and development of dead zones in the oceans and could render them less hospitable to most marine life.

Climate Change: The global warming causes warming seas, ocean acidification, Polar ice melting and the consequent sea-level rise, are dramatically affecting marine ecosystems. Warmer waters cause coral bleaching and their death. Carbon -di- oxide based ocean acidification reduces the ability of sea organisms such as shellfish and corals to build shells and skeletons with serious implications for marine ecology.

Marine Protection: Marine Protected Areas (MPA) are the need of the hour, though of questionable success. An MPA must regulate fishing or coral mining and other related activities. Countries concerned with this ocean degradation and over exploitation have come up with an initiative viz., 30x30 campaign.

This campaign aims to protect 30 per cent of the world's oceans by 2030, through a global network of MPAs to safeguard the health of the world's oceans and help to combat the effects of climate change.

Fisheries Management: The imposition of regulated fishing quotas and ecosystem-based management with focus on the overall health of the entire ecosystem rather than just a specific set of species is the need of the hour. Such restrictions, will reduce the catch with economic loss to the fishing community. This loss needs to be compensated through funding small-scale fisheries and local communities. Such measures will only help in reducing over-exploitation and ensuring sustainable stocks.



Coral rehabilitation

Restoration Projects: Ecosystem restoration is central to the conservation of mangroves, coral reefs, and seagrass beds in many sections of our planet. Coral restoration thus normally embraces coral rearing in nurseries and their transplantation back onto degraded reef patches. Alongside the restoration of habitat for marine life, mangrove reforestation has the added benefit of breaking the forces of storms, along with enhancing carbon stores.

Conclusions

Marine ecosystems should, at all costs, be protected, as they sustain human life, Controls climate. An immediate and concerted action in defense of marine biodiversity and resource sustainability is a priority requiring the support of the international governing bodies. As a result, marine systems will have a chance to prosper for generations to come through a network of MPAs, sustainable fishery management, pollution control, habitat restoration.

A healthy ocean helps build a healthy planet. ☀

ENCOUNTERS WITH GREAT CATS IN FORMER MUDUMALAI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

V. Sundararaju. IFS,
Former DCF, Tamilnadu

Management Plan:

The experience of watching the great cats dated back to 1979 while I was involved in preparation of Management Plan for Mudumalai Wildlife sanctuary. My temporary stay was in the rest shed located at Kargudi on the bank of Moyar River. It was a linear building consisting of two tiled roofed rooms. During day time I used to travel in the forest on elephant back, jeep or by foot and collect necessary details for writing the plan. Night time was devoted to writing the plan. Sometimes there would be power interruption, on such occasions, the plan was written with the help of candle light.

Role model in my career:

Dr. S. John Joseph IFS, the then Wildlife Warden, involved me in preparation of the Management Plan. He was our House Tutor in S.F.R.C (Southern Forest Rangers' College, Coimbatore) during our training period in the year 1974-76. He is known for his sincerity, knowledge, strictness, hard work, uprightness, straight forwardness, etc. He was really very magnanimous in sharing his vast and deep knowledge with the trainees. I was very much inspired by him and he was my role model. During my deputation to Mudumalai for writing the Management Plan, I had the very rare opportunity of learning many interesting and intricate details about wildlife from him. Whatever knowledge I gained from him helped me a lot while managing Srivilliputhur Grizzled Giant Squirrel Sanctuary and Kanyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary.



Along With Dr S. John Joseph In Kodaikanal Pinus Plantation

Elephant carcass found in Moyar river:

Since Moyar was flowing just about 20 feet from the shed, whenever I stayed there, I used to bathe in the river only. My stay would be there continuously for a maximum of one week or at the most about 10 days, because every now and then I would be travelling to Ootacamund, Bandipur (The adjoining Wildlife Sanctuary of Karnataka State) and Bangalore. Madhan, a tribal watcher was provided for my assistance. One day Madhan came to me and he informed that an elephant had been found dead about 50 meters away from my usual bathing place on the upstream side and further added that the carcass had been almost decomposed. Immediately the information was passed on to Mr. Selvaraj, FRO, Kargudy Range and postmortem was conducted by the Forest Veterinary Doctor Dr. Raj Thompson. I too accompanied the Doctor while carrying out the postmortem. Finally it was found to be a natural death. Since there was good flow of water in the river, no problem of any contamination arose due to the decomposing carcass. Subsequently when I narrated this incidence once to my family members, my Grandma sarcastically commented on my insistence in the house about the cleanliness and neatness, while I was bathing in dirty waters in the forests! .

Confronted Wild Tusker:

As leisure time could be found only during night, my writing work would go even up to 2 am. While Kargudi and Theppakkadu Forest Range Offices and the Staff quarters were located on the western side of Thorapalli-Mysore road, the rest shed where I was staying was on the eastern side. In front of the rest shed, on the open ground, extracted sandalwood logs were stored and protected during night time by the tribal watchers. On one night, Madhan came running to my room

where I was writing the plan and told that one wild tusker was coming towards the shed. Exactly about 100 feet away, one wild tusker was fast coming towards us. Immediately the light was switched off and the door closed. But out of curiosity, while watching through the window, the pachyderm walked along the western side of the shed, crossed the road and vanished in the forests on the other side. On many occasions wild elephants used to feed on the young bamboo clumps just behind the rest shed. When they had young ones with them, there would be traffic jam along Thorapalli-Mysore road during their crossing of the road.



A Tusker Feeding On Arenga Wightii Leaves.

Tiger sighted:

It was a day on elephant back, moving through Mudumalai R.F early in the morning around 7 am. The elephant crossed Mudumalai F.R.O's quarters, located deep inside the forests and passed through the moist deciduous forests. While trailing through the thick jungle, two herds of spotted deer numbering about 21 and 18 were sighted. After travelling for about a 1 km, a herd of Gaur (Indian bison) consisting of 1 bull, 2 females, 2 sub-adults and 2 young ones were noticed. The elephant was nearing Ombetta, the largest swamp in the sanctuary providing unhindered view of the animals. There to our surprise, on our left side, near a waterhole about 60 feet away from us, a tiger was found drinking water. The time was around 8.10 AM. The great cat was first noticed by the mahout only. While we waited for about 5 minutes, the tiger quenched its

thirst and slowly disappeared into the deep forest. Subsequently it was verified with the F.R.O, Mudumalai that a tiger was seen moving around that area for quite some time and the field staff were alerted to avoid any possible encounter while moving through that area.

The Tigers are found in evergreen forests, in dry open forests and in grassy swamp areas. At the same time it lives in Sundarbans also which contains trees, mud and water. Tiger requires prey animals to feed on, shade to rest and sleep and water to quench its thirst. Generally it hunts between sunset and dawn. Tiger preys on deer, wild boar, bears and porcupines.



A Lone Tiger Roaming In The Jungle

Panther sighted:

A team of media persons had come from Ootacamund to visit Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary. They were provided with elephant ride the previous day and shown around the elephant camp at Theppakkadu. The next day morning, before breakfast, they were taken by a van for watching some rare animals. First, it was planned to drive the vehicle through the circular road which leads to Moyar Waterfalls. After travelling for about 15 minutes along Theppakkadu-Mysore road, the van took a right turn and started passing through the earthen road called Circular road. Within minutes of entering the road, a panther jumped on the road from the nearby forest to the surprise of everyone. The panther walked very casually and vanished into the forest on the other side of the road. Really it was a memorable occasion



©Daniel D'Almeida MD

A Mother Panther With Its Young One On The Top Of A Tree

not only for the media persons but also for everyone who had the very rare opportunity of sighting the great cat. Generally Panther is a nocturnal animal and during my stay in Mudumalai, I had seen the animal mostly during night hours only.

Panther is not only found in forests but it manages to live in any place. It thrives even in open country among rocks and scrub. It preys on deer, monkeys, larger rodents, birds, reptiles and crabs.

After having a view of the Moyar Waterfalls, while returning to the Mysore-Theppakkadu main road, we were greeted by the gracious sight of the familiar stump-tailed elephant foraging on the ground vegetation lonely.

This elephant was found often in this area of forest giving good pose to the visitors and mostly moving alone. The van was driven through sand road on the other side of the main road. A large herd of nearly 21 Gaurs were sighted near the watch tower built on the bank of a water hole close to Kakkanallah river which is the boundary between Mudumalai and Bandipur. After viewing some more wildlife, the press people happily returned to Sylvan Lodge - a Forest Rest House built on the bank of Moyar river near Theppakkadu.

I am happy to share my great memories of those days for you all to experience the same. ●

MY BIG CATS

G. Sivagurunathan, Former ACF

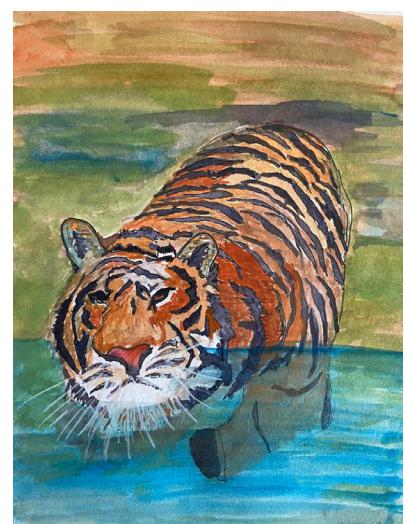
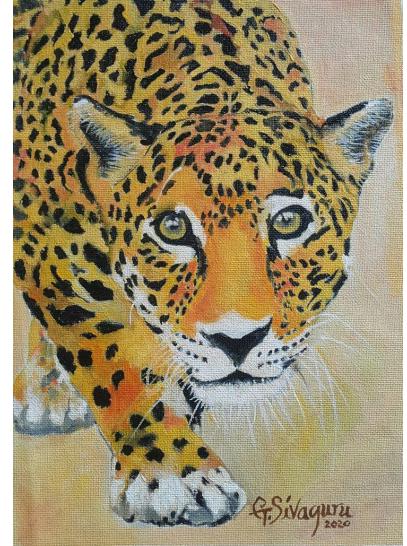


*Retirement is blank sheet of paper. It is a chance to redesign
your life into something new and different.*

-Patrick Foley

Working as a forester for more than 30 years gave me an enjoyable, pleasant, pollution free and physique-rich life. When retirement comes true in my life, I want to spend stress free life, in more meaningful ways. I spend more time with friends and relatives, travel, rediscovering my painting hobbies, reading books in a library, writing and occasional trading. I simply enjoy the freedom to relax and take it easy for a change filled with joy and happiness. My painting hobby, gives a thrill and meaningful mental relief to me. I inspire the painting of wild animals and birds, I want to share some of my big cats with you all.





MURDER OF CROWS

K. DHANAPAL, M.Sc,
Former Deputy Conservator of Forests

A group of crows is commonly referred as “Murder of Crows”. One cannot miss these shiny black birds, right from childhood story of a thirsty crow dropping pebbles in a jar or a cunning fox stealing a vada from a foolish crow and many more. Crows are intelligent, adaptable to any environment and versatile.



House Crow (top) and Large-billed / Jungle Crow (bottom)

Being black, they are associated with plethora of superstitions which are mostly bad than good. The myths and facts associated with this bird are quite fascinating.

Let me first list out my own experiences in my childhood. Whenever a crow calls near our house, my mother used to tell that some guests will arrive soon. Coincidentally this has happened in one or two occasions.

One day when my lawyer friend and myself started to go somewhere, a crow flew from left to

right and my friend cancelled the trip saying that it's a bad omen!! (Even cat is not ok, but crow!!!)

Throughout history they are projected as bad omen. Famous director Alfred Hitchcock is no exception in his movie “The Birds”. They are often associated with death. In medieval Europe crows were thought to be witches in the sky.

In many cultures, crows are often considered as omen of death. In some European traditions the sight of a single crow is considered as a sign of impending death. In western folklore a crow flying over your house is considered as misfortune. Native American culture considers the crows as messengers between the living and dead.

In Shakun Shastra, seeing a crow drinking water is considered a good sign, meaning the person will gain money. In some traditions, crows are seen as symbols of change or transformation. Their ability to adopt different environment, can signify the need for change or the arrival of new beginnings.

English people are no exception when it comes to superstitions. The ravens at the Tower of London (His Majesty’s Royal Palace) are captive birds believed to protect the Tower and the Crown. A superstition holds that if the six resident Ravens leave the Tower of London, the Crown and the Tower will fail!. King Charles II is thought to have been the first to order that the ravens be protected after being warned of this prophecy. The Ravens are well taken care of by a

Raven Master who is responsible for feeding and safety. Vets are also appointed for this purpose. These Ravens are tourist attraction, whoever visits London Towers. Sadly, these birds' wings are clipped to protect from traffic accidents and prevent them flying to the top of the Tower. They enjoy the Royal treatment at the cost of being a caged bird



Eurasian Jackdaw in Srinagar (J&K)

Being black maybe the only reason for these superstitions, generated over the years by humans. On the other hand crows are intelligent and known for their cognitive and problem solving skills.

They are even known to drop the nuts on the road so that it would be crushed by the moving vehicles and easy to eat later. Crows are incredibly observant and watch people, figure out their routine and even remember their faces.

Crows are romantic and mate for life. They build nest together, raise the young together. Some other birds are also smart like, Parrots can talk, Owls looks wise and pigeons can find their way home from anywhere, but none of them have the mental toolkit the crows have. Crows are omnivorous and eat anything that's edible. They can mimic including human speeches like parrots. They have an amazing memory and remember the faces for years.



American Crow, Toronto, Canada.



Carrion Crow, Tokyo, Japan

Crows are incredibly protective of their mates and families. They are known to dive bomb people or animals that gets closer to their nest. I myself experienced the attack when I was walking under a tree where the crows had nests.

Crows can live anywhere between 10-15 years in the wild and in captivity they live up to 20 years. Oldest recorded crow lived up to 59 years.



Red-billed Chough in Himachal Pradesh

Crows belong to the family called Corvidae, which includes crows, Raven, Rook, Jackdaw and Choughs. Crow means a bunch of different crow species belong to the genus called *Corvus*.

They can be found in every continent except Antarctica and South America. To date there are 40 species that are commonly called Ravens, Crows, Rooks and Jackdaws. In India we have House Crow, Large billed (Jungle) Crow, Hooded Crow, Carrion Crow, Northern Raven, Punjab Raven, Brown necked Raven, Rook, Eurasian Jackdaw, Red-billed Chough and Alpine (Yellow-billed) Chough.

The sight of a dead crow attracts more number of live ones. During this ritual, the live crows almost never touch the dead one, which rules scavenging out as a motive. Some studies suggest that the mass gathering is a part of survival strategy. The birds are learning about threats and seem hesitant to revisit any spot where they have encountered a dead crow, even if the food is plenty.



Yellow-billed Chough in Himachal Pradesh.

Crows are so smart that some zoologists call them “feathered apes” (compliment indeed). The New Caledonian Crow’s (from the Caledonian islands in Pacific) brain weighs 0.26 ounces and accounts for 2.7 percent of its body weight. That’s proportionately much larger than the humans which are only 1.9 percent! Hence the

New Caledonian Crows have shown levels of cognition that put them on par with the apes. A study showed that this species is capable of solving a number of sophisticated cognitive tests which suggests that it is particularly intelligent. The New Caledonian Crow has become a model species for scientists trying to understand the impact of tool use and manufacture on the evolution of intelligence.

Who knows, our House Crow also will become super intelligent and start building a nest with Reinforced Cement Concrete!!! (possible due to its fast adaptive nature).

Crows are sometimes nuisance too. In late 90’s, when delicious garbage was plenty in Japan, there was a population explosion of crows. Urban crows try everything available for their nesting material. They used wire-hangers or fiber optic cables for their nests. This has resulted in many power failures which is unheard anywhere else in the world. Japanese solved by providing artificial nests to the growing problem.

Crows are highly sociable, intelligent and they are the cleanup crew of our rotten cities (you would not have missed the familiar scene of people throwing dead rats on the road which is cleaned only by these birds). In our culture during *Purattasi amavasai* we worship our forefathers and put our special food on roof top and wait for crows to eat it thinking our ancestors will come and take the food . Maybe that’s the only time we respect the crows!!!

Next time when you see a crow, show love and affection, otherwise it can “develop” grudge on you! ●

NEWS IN A NUTSHELL

Tamil Nadu to launch trekking trails in 40 forest spots



Trekking enthusiasts, prepare your backpacks and camouflage attire as the TN Wildlife authorities are set to launch one-day trekking trips in various forest areas across the state. To facilitate this, the ‘TN Wilderness Experience Corporation’ has been established, and the first trial trek from Avalanche to Koleribetta was completed on Saturday. Vismiju Viswanathan, head of the newly created corporation, told TOI that 40 locations across 18 forest divisions have been identified for the treks. A total of 400 people have been trained as guides, with each trekking route staffed by 10 trained guides. The trekking routes in TN are categorized as easy, moderate, and tough, and include well-known tourism destinations. Of the 124 approved trekking routes in TN, only 40 have been selected, he said. The guides have been trained in basic hospitality, hygiene, local biodiversity, first aid, back drill, and communication skills. They have been provided with backpacks, trekking shoes, and uniforms. The treks will be moderate, limited to one day, with no camping in the forest areas, he added. Each trek will be limited to a maximum of 15 participants. The department will provide basic refreshments, and the charges for each trek will range from 600 to 5,000.

Additionally, the department will provide insurance coverage to participants, a crucial component of the trekking program, Viswanathan said. The corporation is expected to sign a memorandum of understanding with an insurance company in the coming week. Booking can be done from www.trektamilnadu.com.

Courtesy: Times of India dated 2 Sep 2024 ☀

Climate Change: Forests in Western, Eastern Ghats in Tamil Nadu to become thorny deserts in just 25 years.

CHANGE IN HABITAT SUITABILITY

Tamil Nadu's forest (area in sq.km)

Forest type	Baseline period 1985-2014	By 2050	Change in area	Change percentile
Evergreen	1,880.72	1280.8	-600	-32
Deciduous	13,394.73	10,941.79	-2,453	-18
Thorn	4,291.84	7,344.7	+3053	+71

Eastern Ghats's forest (area in sq.km)

Forest type	Baseline period 1985-2014	By 2050	Change in area	Change percentile
Evergreen	188.7	135.33	-53.3	-29
Deciduous	2,285.37	1,568.80	-716.57	-31
Thorn	1,627.12	2,394.35	+767.24	+47

Western Ghats's forest (area in sq.km)

Forest type	Baseline period 1985-2014	By 2050	Change in area	Change percentile
Evergreen	1,464.72	1,216	-249	-17
Deciduous	6,346.21	5,626	-720	-11
Thorn	1,618.16	2,587.1	+969	+69

The distribution of thorn forest covering the degraded, dry deciduous euphorbia forest is increasing in the foothills of both Eastern and Western Ghats.

Thick and lush green forests of Tamil Nadu taken over by arid desert forests, and degradation of Western and Eastern Ghats into thorn shrubs. That is the future awaiting Tamil Nadu in just 25 years, if no action is taken to mitigate the alarming effects of climate change, warned a study.

According to a draft report prepared by the centre for Climate Change and Disaster Management (CCCDM), Anna University, titled "Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan of Tamil Nadu-Forest Habitat Suitability", the evergreen and deciduous forest areas in Tamil Nadu, mainly in Western and Eastern Ghats, may reduce by 32 per cent and 18 per cent, respectively, by 2050. Simultaneously, the suitability for thorn forests is expected to increase by 71 per cent.

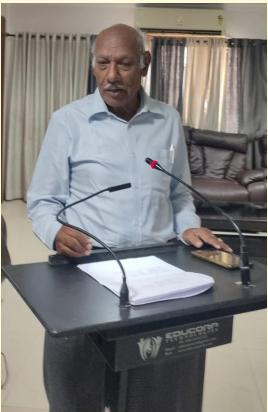
The distribution of thorn forests covering the degraded, dry deciduous euphorbia forest is increasing in the foothills of both Eastern and Western Ghats. This alarming acceleration in degradation is primarily due to high temperature, altered rainfall pattern and prolonged dry spells in post – monsoon season, the report said.

During the baseline period, 1985-2014, around 1,880 sqkm was covered by evergreen forests. But in just 25 years, this area will be reduced to 1,280 sqkm. Deciduous forest will also reduce, to 10,941 sqkm from 13,394 sqkm. However, thorn forest will increase to 7,344 sqkm from 4,291 sqkm. That is, the forest area housing evergreen and deciduous forests will be degraded to arid, which supports thorn forest, the study suggests.

Courtesy: DT Next dated 06.05.2024

TASPEF Annual General body Meeting

24/09/2024



Mr S. Velumani, IFS



Mr S. Palanisamy, DCF



Mr A. Thiruvengadam, ACF



Dr S. David Raj, ACF



Mr S. Dhandayuthapani,
DCF



Mr S. Deepalingam, DCF



Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Conservation and Greening Project for Climate Change Response (TBGPCCR)

TBGPCCR - An Overview:

The Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Conservation and Greening Project for Climate Change Response (TBGPCCR) is being implemented at a cost of Rs.920.52 crores with financial support from JICA as a continuation of Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Conservation and Greening Project (TBGP) with interventions and up-scaling of project components.

Objective:

To mitigate and adapt to climate change and improve ecosystem by undertaking biodiversity conservation, human wildlife conflict mitigation measures, promoting supply chain development, livelihood improvement activities and management capacity development, thereby contributing to sustainable socio-economic development in Tamil Nadu.

2022-23 to 2029-30

Sl. No.	Component	Outlay (in crores)
1.	Ecosystem based Climate Change Measures	305.18
2.	Human Wildlife Conflict Measures	35.27
3.	Promoting Supply Chain Development	7.86
4.	Livelihood Improvement Activities	86.85
5.	Management Capacity Development	309.96
6.	Others (Consultancy, Physical Contingency, Front End Fee, Administration Cost, Interest during Construction, etc.)	175.39
	Total	920.52