

Pressures on the Forest in the Ecologically Critical Areas of Urigam and Anchetty Ranges

Submitted to

The Divisional Forest Officer
Hosur Forest Division
Tamil Nadu

by



Kenneth Anderson Nature Society

Registered Office:
Mohan and Chandrasekhar Chartered Accountants,
No.8, JD Plaza, Opp. TNEB,
Rayakotta Road, Hosur,
Tamil Nadu 635109

MAY 2012

The ecological significance of the forests adjoining river Cauvery in Anchetty and Urigam ranges of Hosur Forest Division is huge. This unique riparian zone is particularly important for many endangered species like Grizzled Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa macroura*), Four-Horned Antelope (*Tetracerus quadricornis*) and Otter (*Lutra perspicillata*). The other schedule species found here include predators such as Leopard, Dhole, Sloth Bear, Marsh Crocodile, Jackal and herbivores such as Elephant, Chital, Gaur, Sambar Deer, Barking Deer, Common Langur etc.

These forests form a vital link in the elephant corridors of South India, connecting the Bannerghatta National Park and the river Cauvery and is going to be ever more critical in terms of a safe habitat for elephants, considering the Elephant Proof Trench being dug to reduce the problem of human-elephant conflict in the division. The forests from a continuous stretch all the way to the the Tiger Reserves of the south and the recent reports of direct sighting of Tiger across Uganiyam in Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, Karnataka should be taken as a sign of tigers trying to expand their territory and already knocking on the doors of Melagiri. Also, a proposal for converting this area into a new Wildlife Sanctuary has been submitted to the Government.

This report intends to bring into the notice of Hosur Forest Division some pressures which exist on these forests and to extend our complete support for better protection of the area. The following are the main issues observed during various visits to the area.

1. Poaching

Poaching has been observed to be happening in various parts of these forests. Two poachers with guns were captured in the camera-trap in Anebiddahalla area on 5th April, 2012. A poacher with snares was photographed in Anchetty Range during Wildlife Census 2012.



(kindly see folder “Poaching” in the CD attached for video and photos).

Unauthorized Entry

Various kinds of unauthorized entry has been observed inside the protected area. Camping and littering is observed along the banks of Cauvery. Various jatres, with and without permission are organized inside the forest where large crowds stay inside the forest even overnight, resulting in large amounts of plastic and liquor bottles being left over in the forest. Most recently, a similar gathering was observed in Raasimanal area on 19th May, 2011. The check-posts at Kesthur, Balagadapallam and Raasimanal should be made more effective. The boards erected at the check-posts have been completely vandalised.



(kindly see folder “Unauthorized Entry” in the CD attached for photos)

Goat Herds

Goat herds, both large and small have been seen inside the RF boundaries even deep inside the forest. There are multiple reasons including mismatch in government schemes which provide goats near forest areas, lack of awareness among people living along the fringes of forests and lack of strict measures taken to control this menace. Goats are regularly captured in camera-traps in Anebiddahalla area and large herds with even up to 500 goats were seen along Doddahalla stream near Raasimanal during wildlife census.



(kindly see folder “Goat Herds” in the CD attached for photos and videos)

Miscellaneous Issues

There are people who stay in Dabaguli and Uganiyam with family. As a result, there is poultry, goats and more worryingly, street dogs in these areas. The street dogs have been reported to hunt Chital and one was seen with a Chital leg near Dabaguli.

Lopping of wood has also been observed, sometimes by a single in small quantities, and in one instance a full tractor load near Kesthur RF.



(kindly see folder “Miscellaneous Issues” in the CD attached for photos and videos)

Considering these problems, we request the forest department to take the following steps.

1. Patrolling in Cauvery

As per discussions with the department, KANS had donated a raft and repaired the engines for patrolling the forests along Cauvery. We request you operationalize them as soon as possible and conduct regular patrolling using the river.

2. Patrolling on Foot

To bring down the offenses that has come to notice, more regular and stricter patrolling inside the RF is required. We request you to step up foot-patrol in these critical areas. KANS would like to help the department by joining the watchers and guards on joint-patrols on randomly chosen dates. This could provide support and encouragement to the field staff and regular reports from the field to the head-quarters.

3. Declaring Dabaguli as Plastic-Free Zone

Dabaguli needs to be declared as a plastic-free zone. This would help in stronger implementation of anti-plastic drive in the area. KANS would like to help the department in all ways to get this declaration official.

4. Stricter Screening at Check-posts

The check-posts at Balagadapallam, Biligundlu and Kesthur should be strictly monitored. All vehicles should be checked, and people frisked for forest produce and plastic. Gaps on the sides of check-posts which help motorbikes to pass without stopping should be closed. The boards at these check-posts should be repainted with the message of conservation and strict warnings.

We could like to convey our appreciation and respect towards the various tasks department is already engaging towards the protection of forest land, prevention of encroachment, providing sustainable livelihood for people on the fringes of forests, reducing human-elephant conflict, ensuring fodder for elephants inside the RF etc and assure our complete support for these. We humbly request you to take into consideration the points raised in this report also for our greater goal of restoring Melagiris to its erstwhile glory.