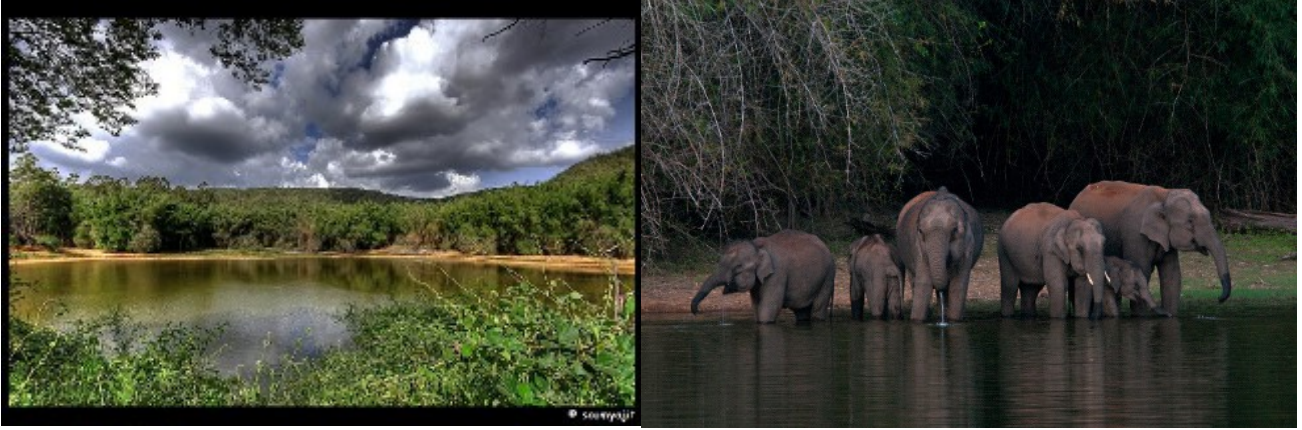


CONSERVATION OF SAMIERI LAKE



Proposal and Video Captures from the the Lake

Submitted to
District Forest Officer, Hosur Forest Division
Sub-Collector, Hosur
Collector, Krishnagiri



Kenneth Anderson Nature Society
Hosur

January 2013

Introduction

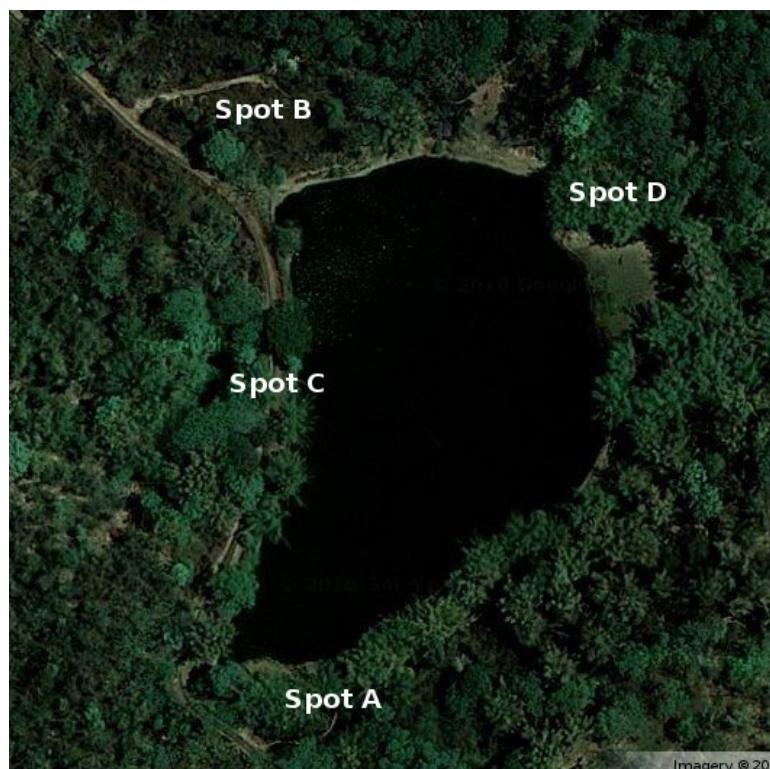
Samieri (+12° 23' 35.06", +77° 51' 56.93") is a very important waterhole in Denkanikottai Range of Hosur Forest Division. The lake is located in Samieri RF, along the road from Denkanikottai to Bettamugilalam. The lake is surrounded by tropical dry evergreen, tropical dry deciduous and bamboo forests, and is inhabited by good number of elephants, along with various other fauna. It holds water even during summer, and is therefore critical for the wildlife in the area, especially when all other sources of water in the vicinity dry up.



Kenneth Anderson Nature Society would like to bring to your attention some threats to wildlife that have been observed by our members in and around Samieri lake. Based on the information available with us and after careful deliberations we would also like to recommend some measures to reduce these threats to the wildlife in the division.

Problems at Samieri

Samieri lies along the present road from Denakanikottai to Bettamugilalam making it prone to human & vehicular interference. In addition to the regular traffic plying on this road following are the main problems observed at Samieri:



1. People enter inside the RF and camp along the bank away from the road (mostly at *Spot A* in the map). A lot of wildlife, most importantly elephants, also approach the lake from the same spot. Vehicles, both two wheelers and four wheelers are taken up to this spot, and people have been observed to be picnicking, drinking liquor and having food. As a result, the place is strewn with liquor bottles, broken glass pieces, food plates, water bottles and plastic covers.



2. The forest department watch tower at Samieri (*Spot B* in the map) is being misused by tourists and anti-social elements. The spot attracts a lot of visitors and the area around the watch-tower is strewn with liquor bottles, food plates, water bottles, plastic covers, condoms and syringes.



3. People park their vehicles along the road and wait to sight the elephants when they come to drink water in the evenings (mostly at *Spot C* in the map). It has been observed that the crowd talks loudly, creating disturbance to the animals.
4. There are various trails running into the forest from the lake (mostly from *Spot D* in map) and these are used by wildlife to approach the lake. Over-enthusiastic wildlife-tourists and some residents of local villages looking for a quiet spot for consuming alcohol have been noticed in this area.

5. Fishing and swimming has also been observed in the lake.



Unless controlled immediately, these could result in severe human-elephant conflict at the lake. It could also result in elephants not being able to take water from Samieri, thereby forced to change their pattern of movement in the forest, resulting in serious ramifications in other parts of the division.

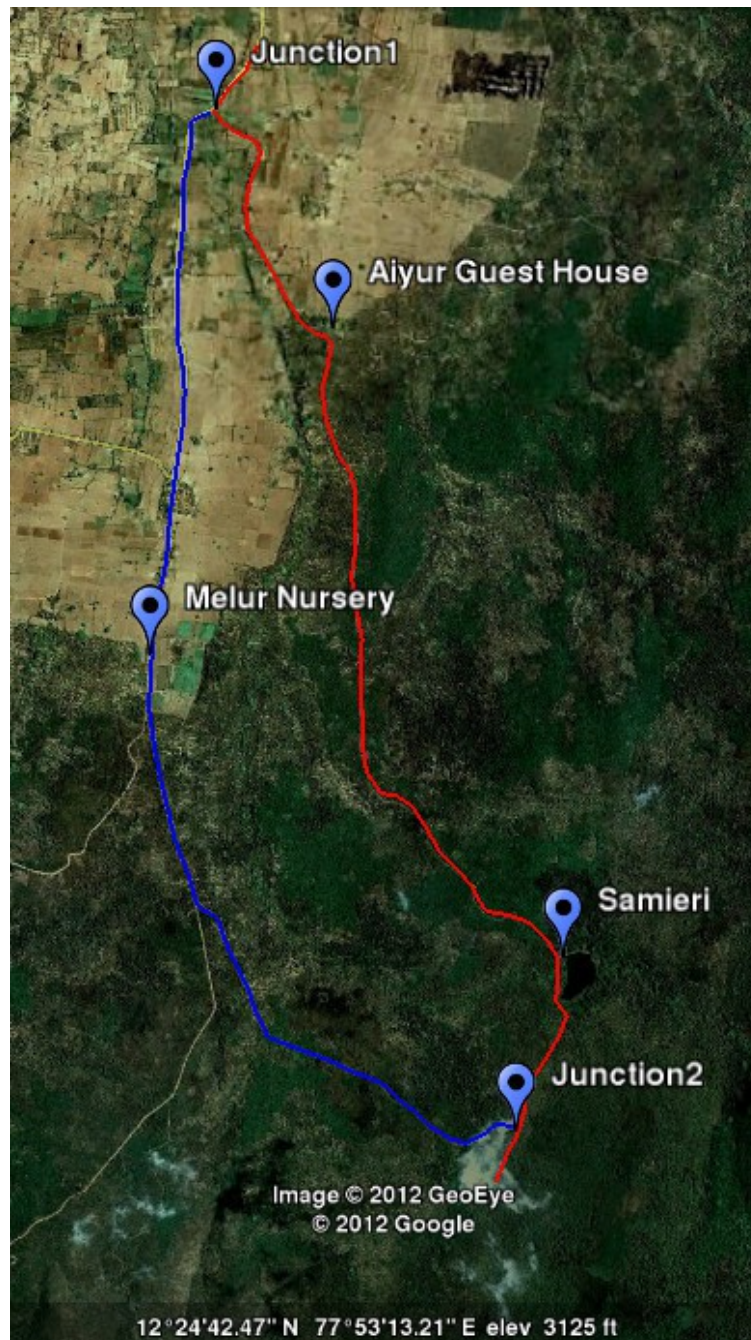
KANS had deployed camera-traps at Samieri for a month in January 2013. Kindly find the videos attached along with this report.

Short Term Measures: Awareness and Enforcement

All forms of human disturbance at the lake, except for people using the road to Bettamugilalam, should be immediately stopped. Residents of nearby villages have to be taken into confidence to keep the lake undisturbed for wildlife.

1. Sign boards can be used to educate and warn people against shouting, drinking, stopping unnecessarily and trespassing. Also, the details of fine for ignoring these rules and can be specified, which will help department staff in taking action against people who neglect the rules. The boards can be painted in forest-friendly colours to minimise disturbance for elephants and to prevent people from tearing out the stickers.
2. All entires to the lake should be secured from human disturbance. The present trench at *Spot A* is not regularly maintained, and vehicles can be taken right to the bank of the lake. This should be prevented by trenches, chains or any other way forest department feels is appropriate, with due consideration to the elephant movement around the lake.
3. To spread awareness among local residents, a half-day programme can be organised on the same day that the boards and stops are put up. Around 10 members from KANS, along with representatives from nearby villages like Unchetty, Aiyur and Bettamugilalam can clean up the litter around the lake. A senior officer from forest department can give a short message on the importance of Samieri to reduce human-elephant conflict, and the boards can be installed together by all parties present.
4. Forest Guards / Watchers should be empowered to patrol Samieri area more frequently and fine appropriately anybody not abiding by the rules put up in the board.
5. Steps should be taken to prevent illegal fishing in Samieri.

Long Term Measure: Alternate Road



Parallel to the present road along Samieri, there is an old road via Melur, which, if repaired, can be a good alternative. This road bifurcates from the present road after Unchetty village at Junction1 (+12° 25' 35.17", +77° 51' 5.03"). Where the present road passes via Aiyur forest guest house and Samieri lake, this old road passes via the villages of Javanasandiram, Gedadhalli and Melur and the forest department nursery, and meets the old road 750 meters after Samieri Lake at Junction2 (+12° 23' 13.25", +77° 51' 47.74").

Initial inquiries indicate that this proposed alternative could have been the original road to Bettamugilalam and it already has electricity lines running along it. Repairing this road will have the following benefits:

1. The road passing through Samieri can be completely closed for public movement, thereby significantly reducing human-elephant conflict, and improving the accessibility of the lake for

wildlife. The existing check-post at Aiyur guest house and a new check-post at Junction2 can be permanently closed to restrict traffic through the forest.

2. Residents of Javanoandiram, Gedadhalli and Melur can have public transport directly passing through their villages. Residents of Tolvubetta, Gullatti and Manchi have to walk much shorter distances to get to the nearest bus-stop. On the other hand, the present route does not have any villages or settlements along it.
3. The distance through the forest comes down by 900 meters. The alternative road passes through forest for only 3.3 km compared to the existing road which passes through forest for 4.2 km. Also, both roads are of approximately the same overall length. The distance or time taken to Bettamugilalam does not increase.
4. The road is already black-topped till Melur. Only the last 2 km need to be repaired and black-topped.
5. The existing check-post near Melur and other infrastructure at the nursery can be used to regulate and check traffic in this new route.

We request the District Forest Officer and the Collector to take immediate measures under Chapter II, Section 20 of the Tamil Nadu Forest Act, 1882 (*Power to stop ways and water course in reserve forests: The District Forest Officer may from time to time, with the previous sanction of the Government, stop any public or private way or water-course in a reserved forest: provided that a reasonably convenient substitute for the way or water-course so stopped already exists, or has been provided or constructed in lieu thereof*) to protect Samieri in the long run.

Conclusion

We request you to look into these suggestions and kindly do the needful for better conservation of Samieri. KANS is willing to provide any support or assistance as required in this regard.