

10 REASONS FOR THE IMMEDIATE NOTIFICATION OF CAUVERY WILDLIFE SANCTUARY (TAMIL NADU)

Submitted to
**THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU**

by



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INTRODUCTION

The Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary was first proposed by the noted naturalist Shri. M. Krishnan immediately after the promulgation of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972. Various other proposals have been put up since then from time to time.

A proposal is under the consideration by the office of the PCCF and it includes areas along the Cauvery River in the Hosur and Dharmapuri Forest Divisions, including the unique Gutterayan RF.

This report highlights some of the important reasons why the proposed Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary should be notified without further delay.

1. GRIZZLED GIANT SQUIRREL

Grizzled Giant Squirrel is a previously unrecorded species for Hosur Forest Division. Its finding was reported by Dr. N. Bhaskaran in the Journal of Threatened Taxa¹



The proposed Cauvery Wild life Sanctuary is the only forest in Tamil Nadu other than Srivilliputhur that harbors the Grizzled Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa macroura*). While globally, the conservation status is listed as Near Threatened under the IUCN Red List, locally the situation is much more critical in the absence of any population studies.

Adequate conservation measures within the proposed Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary can ensure the largest riverine habitat for this habitat specialist (N. Bhaskaran).

Grizzled Giant Squirrel is recognized as an important animal worthy of special attention to its conservation by the MoEF. Special schemes are available with enhanced grants and funding from the MoEF for its conservation.

1: A New Site Record of the Grizzled Giant Squirrel *Ratufa macroura* (Penant, 1769) in the Hosur Forest Division, Eastern Ghats, India and its Conservation Significance, Journal of Threatened Taxa, 26 June 2011.

2. PRESENCE OF ENDANGERED WILDLIFE

The proposed sanctuary is home to many more endangered wildlife, whose protection under Wildlife Protection Act needs to be ensured.



No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	IUCN Status
1	Four-horned antelope	<i>Tetracerus quadricornis</i>	VULNERABLE
2	Indian gaur	<i>Bos gaurus</i>	VULNERABLE
3	Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>	VULNERABLE
4	Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	NEAR-THREATENED
5	Smooth-coated otter	<i>Lutrogale perspicillata</i>	VULNERABLE
6	Sloth bear	<i>Melursus ursinus</i>	VULNERABLE
7	Wild dog	<i>Cuon alpinus</i>	ENDANGERED
8	Asian elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>	ENDANGERED
9	Grizzled giant squirrel	<i>Ratufa macroura</i>	NEAR-THREATENED
10	Indian pangolin	<i>Manis crassicaudata</i>	NEAR-THREATENED
11	Rusty spotted cat	<i>Prionailurus rubiginosus</i>	VULNERABLE
12	Egyptian vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	ENDANGERED
13	Painted stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	NEAR-THREATENED
14	Grey headed fish eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>	NEAR-THREATENED
15	Lesser fish eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga humilis</i>	NEAR-THREATENED

3. DISPERSAL OF ELEPHANTS FROM HOSUR FOREST DIVISION

An exodus of elephant herds from the Hosur Forest Division has been observed since 1980s. The strength of herds attempting such dispersal reached its highest in 2011 at around 70 individuals.



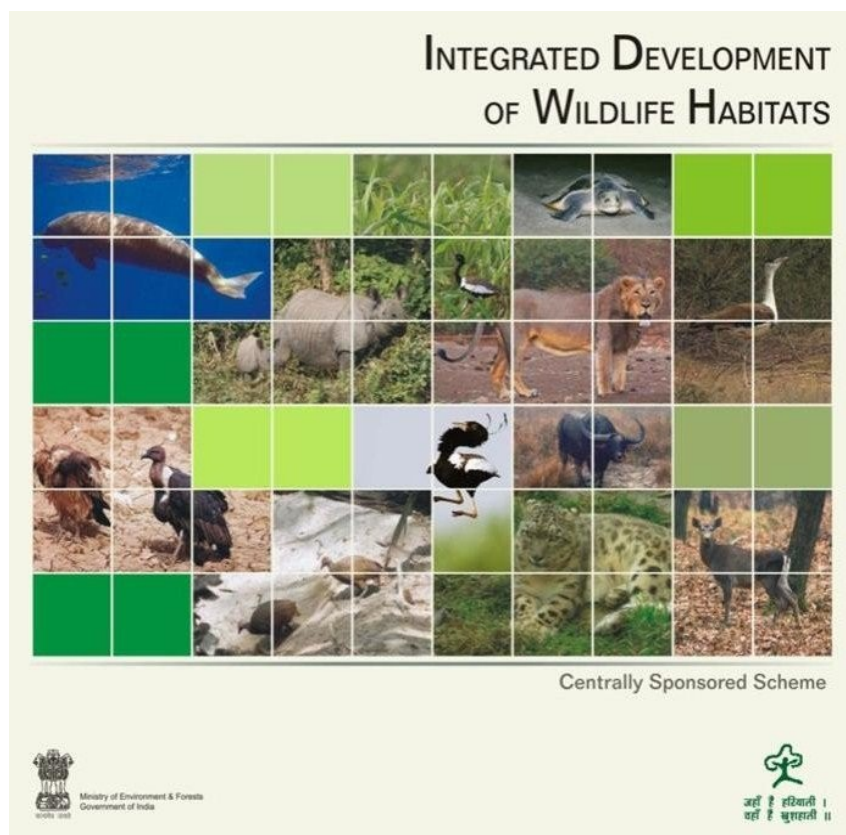
A study by Mr. Ramesh Kumar (Ecology of Asian elephants, their habitats and interaction with people in Hosur and Dharmapuri Forest Divisions - 1994) investigating the dispersal of elephants out of the Hosur Forest Division concluded that causes were - threat to elephant habitat from heavy livestock grazing, competition for water resources from livestock, wood cutting, exploitation of bamboo, collection of minor forest produce, proliferation of *Lantana camara*, fires, increase in road network into the forest areas, general disturbances and severe levels of human elephant conflict.

These sustained attempts at further dispersal by large number of elephants clearly indicate that problems facing elephants in the Hosur Forest Division identified by Ramesh Kumar have become very severe.

Allowing the elephants to disperse like they did in the '80s will be disastrous as the landscape has changed vastly due to human activity. The only option is to contain the elephants within the Hosur and Dharmapuri forest divisions by protecting the habitat and making it suitable for elephants once more.

4. INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT OF WILDLIFE HABITATS PROGRAM

Creation of Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary and the presence of Grizzled Giant Squirrel will make available 100% grants from the Centrally sponsored scheme for all kinds of recurring and non recurring expenses including creation of anti-poaching camps, hiring of man power, capacity building, purchase of vehicles arms and ammunition, creation of barriers, maintenance of vehicles etc. The plan overlay for protected areas are much higher compared to reserve forests, and this can be used to protect the forests better and plan long term conservation projects.



5. WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed area is an important catchment for the Cauvery river system. Streams such as Chinnar, Anaibiddahalla, Doddahalla channel around 800 mm of rainfall from the Hosur Plateau into the river.

The Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary will ensure enhanced protection of the remaining forest cover, thereby reducing soil erosion and siltation of downstream reservoirs like Mettur Dam.



6. RICH BIODIVERSITY

The proposed area has rich biodiversity (please see flora and fauna checklists² in Appendix I). It contains at least 35 mammals, 182 birds and over 103 tree species. Altitude ranges from around 200 meters above MSL to 1390 meters above MSL with different habitat types such as riverine, dry deciduous, xeric, scrub to tropical wet evergreen forests.



Riparian Fringe Forests along Cauvery

Wet Evergreen Forests in Guthereyan

Creation of the proposed sanctuary will ensure the preservation of this rich biodiversity.

2 - Vertebrate Faunal Diversity in Hosur Forest Division and its Contiguous Habitats in Dharmapuri Forest , Division of Tamil Nadu, Asian Nature Conservation Foundation and Kenneth Anderson Nature Society , May 2010 (Appendix I)

7. DEGRADATION OF FORESTS

A study by J. C. Daniel³ found out that between the years 1990 and 2003 dense forest cover decreased from 1006.4 sq km to 529.6 sq km. Open forest had increased from 358.8 sq km to 634.4 sq km and scrub forest had increased from 27.1 sq km to 205.7 sq km. The nature of forest cover of Hosur-Dharmapuri had become more open with extensive scrub patches.

It is reasonable to assume that the trend has continued and probably accelerated after 2003. The seriousness and intensity of the problems need to be acknowledged and corrective measures need to be put in place. This can only be done by enhancing the status of the important parts of the Hosur-Dharmapuri Divisions to a protected area and re-orienting the management towards wildlife conservation.



Firewood Smuggling



Cattle Penning

3: The population, distribution, habitat and problems of the Asian Elephant in Andhra Pradesh, India, including an assessment of the causes for their migration from the Hosur-Dharmapuri forests of Tamil Nadu into Andhra Pradesh, J. C. Daniel et al (2008)

8. DETERRENCE AGAINST WILDLIFE CRIME

Creation of Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary will provide access to central funds for enhanced protection infrastructure and capacity building. Wild life crimes committed in sanctuaries can be prosecuted more effectively and attract much more severe punishment thereby providing an effective deterrent.



9. THE ONLY WILDLIFE SANCTUARY IN THE CAUVERY BASIN OF TAMIL NADU

When created, the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary will be the only protected area conserving the unique ecosystem of the Eastern Ghats and the Cauvery basin.



10. TIGER CONSERVATION LANDSCAPE

The proposed area forms a part of the Global Priority Tiger Conservation Landscape. The existence of Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary along the right bank of the Cauvery in Karnataka will create a large tract of contiguous protected area. This tract is connected to the forests of Sathaymangalam through Kollegal and Kanakpura Forest Divisions and Billigirirangaswamy Tiger Reserve.



Map showing interconnection between Hosur Forest Division and other protected areas.

Increased protection and awareness especially in tiger reserves are leading to a resurgence in tiger numbers and the tiger range in southern India is increasing. In fact, a tiger was sighted in February 2012 across the river in the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary (Karnataka) opposite to the Uganiyam anti poaching camp in the proposed sanctuary area. Strict protection of the proposed area will lead to a healthy population of ungulate prey species and the area will once again become habitable for the tiger.

CONCLUSION

In light of the above reasons, and the fact that the proposed area meets all the requirements under Section 26 A (1)(b) of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary notification should be brought out forthwith by the Government of Tamil Nadu.