

Natural Heritage Centers Of Tamilnadu With Special Reference To Wildlife Sanctuaries

Dr. K. Kumaran

Assistant Professor, Department of History
Arignar Anna Govt Arts College, Villupuram.

Spread over 958 sq.km., this sanctuary can be reached through **Topslip** in Anamalai hills in the western ghats. An ecological paradise, this sanctuary encompasses a national park with an area of 108 sq.km.¹ Abutting Kerala on the west, this hill forest boasts of thick growth of trees, folds of terrains with evergreen sholas. About 800 species out of 2000 south Indian flora are distributed here.²

This sanctuary nurtures arboreal animals like lion tailed macaque³, bonnet macaque, common langur, Nilgiris langur, Malabar giant squirrel and greyish giant squirrel. The ground animals listed are as follows: Tiger, panther, elephant, gaur, pangolin, sambar, spotted deer, barking deer, mouse deer, wild boar, dhole, sloth bear, porcupine, Nilgiris tahr⁴, civet cat and toddy cat. The avifauna includes racket tailed drongo, black headed oriole, paradise fly catcher, whistling thrush, emerald dove, green pigeon, tickell's flower pecker, rufous wood pecker, rose ringed parakeet, black eagle, great Indian Malabar pied hornbill, fiery blue bird and green billed Malkhoha etc.⁵

Other Eco centres equally enticing in the sanctuary are monkey falls at **Aaliyar**, Crocodile breeding centre at **Amatavathi**, **Gran hills**, **Attakatti**, **Nirrar**, **Kullipatti**, **Manompally**, **Chinnar Thirumoorthy**, **Varagaliyar** and **Manjampathy**.⁶ Trekking sheds are also available at **Manjapally** and **Varagaliyar**, while a wildlife interpretation centre is located at **Aaliyar** and a medicinal plant interpretation centre is also located at **Topslip**.⁷

Other Important Details⁸

a) Altitude : 340 - 2400 metres above sea level

- b) Rainfall : 500 - 5000 mm annually
- c) Monsoon : South West and North East monsoon
- d) Climate : Pleasant equable warm climate
January - October, chill winter at
high altitude November -
December.
- e) Best season : May to January
- f) Access : **Pollachi** 35 km. by rail and road.
Coimbatore 75 km. by Air.
- g) Nearest gasoline station : Pollachi - 35 km.
- h) Time to visit : 6.00 hrs. to 8.00 hrs.
17.00 hrs. to 19.00 hrs.
- i) Accommodation : Forest Guest House at **Topslip,**
Varagaliyar, Sethumadai.
PWD Guest House with food at
Udumalaipettai.
E.B. Guest House at **Attakatti.**
- j) Other facilities : Elephants and vehicles on hire.
- k) Authority : Wild Life Warden,
178, Meenakarai Salai,
Pollachi, Pin - 642 001.

MUDUMALAI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

This sanctuary is located where the **Nilgiri hills**, the offshoot of the Western Ghats meet the Eastern Ghats.⁹ The Mudumalai wildlife sanctuary has varied mixture of flat land, undulating park land, open grassland, swamp, valleys and nullos.¹⁰ The **Moyyar** river in this region forms a series of spectacular cascades on its way. **Mudumalai** is located some 65 km. away from Udagamandalam and situated along the

Udagamandalam - Mysore Highway.¹¹ This 321 sq. km. wide sanctuary encompasses a National Park measuring an area of 103 sq. km. The vegetation is varied and primarily moist deciduous. It becomes dry deciduous towards Bandhipur, mainly mixed forests with bamboos (*Bambusa arundinacea*), natural teak (*Tectana grandis*), Dhaura (*Anogeissus*), India almond (*Terminalia*), Dhaman (*Grewia*) and blooming trees like Indian laburnum (*Cassia fistula*) are some of the flora.¹² The fauna includes elephant, gaur, bonnet macaque, common langur, tiger and leopard, chital, dhole panther, sloth bear, python, barking deer, four-horned antelope, otter, crocodile (mugger), giant flying squirrel, sambar, hyena, wild dog, wild bear, mouse deer, spotted deer, Jackal, hare, porcupine and mongoose.¹³ The birds listed in the sanctuary are peacock, grey jungle fowl, the red spur fowl, the grey partridge quails, goggle eyed plover, Malabar whistling thrush, large racket - tailed drong, the shama, the magpie-robin, spotted babbler, small green barbet, green pigeon, little brown dove, Malabar grey hornbill, bulbul, mynah, etc.¹⁴ Among birds of prey, eagles, hawks, buzzards, harriers, falcons, and king vultures are predominant, besides some migratory water birds.¹⁵

Other important details¹⁶

- | | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| a) Altitude | : | 1000 m. above MSL |
| b) Rainfall | : | 2300 mm annually |
| c) Access | : | Road : National Highway passes through the sanctuary |
| | | Rail : 65 km. Ooty. |
| | | 95 km. Mysore. |
| | | Air : 160 km. Coimbatore |
| d) Season | : | September to May. |

- e) Accommodation : Hotel Tamil Nadu, TTDC Ltd.,
Masinagudi.
Forest Guest House at
Abhayaranyam, Kargudi,
Masinagudi, Teppakadu (with
catering arrangements)
- f) Other Facilities : Vehicles on hire and elephant safari
- g) Nearest Gasoline Station : Ooty - 65 km.
- h) Authority : The Wildlife Warden,
Mahalingam Buildings,
Coonoor Road,
Ooty - 643 001.

MUKKURTHI NATIONAL PARK

Located on the high altitudes of the Nilgiris, comprising rolling downs interspersed with temperate sholas, this park is also a part of **Nilgiri Bio-sphere reserve** and situated 40 km. from Udthagamandalam (Ooty).¹⁷ It contains a viable population of Nilgiri thar (*Hamitragus - hilocrius*), sambar, barking deer, Nilgiri marten, otter, jungle cat, jackal etc.¹⁸ Avifauna consists of hillbirds viz. laughing and whistling thrushes, woodcock, wild pigeon and black eagle. Butterflies with Himalayan affinity like the blue admiral, Indian red admiral, Indian fritillary, Indian cabbage white, hedge blues and rainbow trouts can also be seen.¹⁹

Trekking routes exist from **Parsan valley, Portimund, Pykara** etc. Trout fishing is recommended in the rivers and lakes of **Mukurthi**.²⁰ Permission from Assistant Director, Fisheries Department, Udagamandalam must be obtained in advance for fishing.

Other Informations²¹

- a) Altitude : 2400 m. average
- b) Annual rainfall : 1300 mm.
- c) Nearest Railway Station : Udagamandalam (Ooty) 45 km.

- d) Nearest Air-port : Coimbatore 140 km.
- e) Best season : February to May
September to November
- f) Accommodation : Forest Rest House at Avalanche,
Pykara and trekking sheds.
- g) Authority : The Wildlife Warden,
Mahalingam Buildings,
Coonoor Road,
Ooty - 643 001.

KALAKKADU WILD LIFE SANCTUARY

It is situated in an extensive preserve declared as a "**Project Tiger Reserve**".²² **Kalakkadu** wild life sanctuary is situated in an area of 223 sq. km. in the Tirunelveli District, including the foothills of western ghats and the adjoining area.²³ The flora ranges from forests of tropical wet ever-green to tropical dry deciduous and thorn forest at down hills. Lion tailed macaque²⁴, Nilgiri langur, bonnet macaque and common langur, Nilgiri tahr, sambar, sloth bear, gaur, elephant, tiger, flying squirrel, panther, wild dog, pangoline are some of the wild life seen in the sanctuary.²⁵ Besides a wide range of birds, reptiles can also be seen. Trekking can be done with prior permission from the Forest (wildlife) Department.

Other Informations²⁶

- a) Annual Rainfall : 1000 mm to 4000 mm
- b) Nearest Airport : Madurai 200 km.
Trivandrum 140 km.
- c) Nearest Rly. Station : Cheranmadevi 20 km.
- d) Best Season : September to March
- e) Accommodation : Forest Rest House at Sengaltheri
with catering facilities.
- f) Authority : The Field Director,
"Project Tiger",

NGO 'A' Colony,
Tirunelveli - 627 007.

MUNDANTHURAI WILD LIFE SANCTUARY

There is nothing to differentiate Mundanthurai sanctuary from that of Kalakkadu, except the absence of elephant and the gaur.²⁷ Situated in the Tirunelveli District, this 567 sq. km sanctuary boasts of dry deciduous to tropical wet evergreen forests. Animal wealth includes tiger, bonnet macaque, langur, slender loris, sloth bear, sambar, chital and wild dog. The sanctuary is excellent for various species of avi-fauna and varieties of reptiles and insects.²⁸ Trekking with prior permission from the Forest (wildlife) Department, along trekking trails can be undertaken.

Other Informations²⁹

- a) Annual Rainfall : 1000 mm to 4000 mm
- b) Nearest Airport : Madurai 200 km.
- c) Nearest Rly. Station : Ambasamudram 6 km.
- d) Best Season : October to January
- e) Accommodation : Forest Rest House at **Mundanthurai** with catering arrangements.
PWD Rest House at **Ambasamudram**, and E.B. Rest House at **Papanasam**.
- f) Authority : The Field Director,
"Project Tiger",
NGO 'A' Colony,
Tirunelveli - 627 007.

POINT CALIMERE WILD LIFE SANCTUARY

This sanctuary is situated in the Nagapattinam District,³⁰ extending an area of 17.26 sq.km. surrounded by sea and shore, comprising forests of

tidal swamps, dry evergreen forests and mangroves. It is bestowed with populations of varied wild life such as chital, wild boar, bonnet macaque, black buck, flamingoes, teals, gulls, terns, plovers and stilts. Special attractions are close encounters with Dolphins and turtles which often come quite close to the shore.³¹

Other Informations³²

- a) Annual Rainfall : 1500 mm
- b) Nearest Airport : Tiruchirappalli 225 km.
- c) Nearest Rly. Station : Tiruthuraipoondi 42 km.
- d) Best Season : Year around, for migratory water birds, November to February
- e) Accommodation : Forest Rest House at **Point Calimere** with catering arrangements.
- f) Other facilities : Boats for cruising
- g) Authority : The Wild Life Warden,
Point Calimere Wild Life Sanctuary,
110, Public Offices Road,
Nagapattinam - 611 011.

SRIVILLIPUTHUR GRIZZLED SQUIRREL WILD LIFE SANCTUARY

Located in the Virudhunagar District, 45 km. off Virudhunagar town, this sanctuary has a composition of dry deciduous forests with patterns on tropical evergreen, semi evergreen forests, moist mixed deciduous forests and grass lands, where grizzled giant squirrels are abound.³³ Other interesting species are flying squirrel, tree shrew, elephant, lion tailed macaque, Nilgiri tahr, mouse deer, barking deer and many a species of birds.³⁴ This sanctuary can be visited all through the year.

Other Informations³⁵

- a) Annual Rainfall : 849 mm
- b) Nearest Airport : Madurai 100 km.
- c) Nearest Rly. Station : Srivilliputhur 15 km.
- d) Accommodation : Forest Rest House at **Mudungiar, Pudupatti, Mudaliaroothu.**
PWD Rest House at **Srivilliputhur.**
- e) Authority : The Wild Life Warden,
Grizzled Wild Life Sanctuary,
118, North Veedi,
Srivilliputhur - 626 125.

GUINDY NATIONAL PARK

The smallest National Park of the country situated in the Chennai metropolitan city, arguably is the only national park set amidst a Metro in India.³⁶ Acting as a lung to Chennai, this national park boasts of dry evergreen scrubs and thorn forests with a composition of animals Viz., black buck, chital, jackal, pangolin and a variety of avifauna.³⁷ This could be visited throughout the year.

Other Details³⁸

- a) Annual Rainfall : 1200 mm
- b) Access : Chennai
- c) Other facilities : This national park encompasses a snake park and a children's park as well.
- d) Authority : The Wild Life Warden,
DMS Compound,
Anna Salai, Chennai - 600 006.

VALLANADU BLACK BUCK SANCTUARY

A scrub forest area spread over to 16.41 sq.km. this sanctuary is situated in Thuthukudi District.³⁹ Black buck, spotted deer, macaques, jungle cat, mongoose and hares are plenty.⁴⁰ This sanctuary can be visited throughout the year.

Other Details⁴¹

- a) Annual Rainfall : 758 mm
- b) Nearest Airport : Madurai 165 km.
- c) Nearest Rly. Station : Tirunelveli 20 km.
- d) Accommodation : Hotels at Tirunelveli.
- e) Authority : The District Forest Officer,
Tirunelveli Division,
Kokkirakulam,
Tirunelveli - 627 009.

VEDANTHANGAL AND KARIKILI BIRD SANCTUARIES

Vedanthangal and Karikili Bird sanctuaries are situated in the Kancheepuram District⁴² sprawling in 30 hectares and 61 hectares area respectively. **Vedanthangal** is the oldest bird sanctuary in the country.⁴³ This has been in existence presumably for more than 200 years.⁴⁴ The villagers had documented their right to protect the winged visitors to this sanctuary. The English East India Company had recognised and renewed their rights in the year 1858. Breeding birds like cormorants, egrets, grey heron, open-billed stork, darter, spoonbill, white Ibis, night herons, grebes, grey pelican etc visit the sanctuary.⁴⁵ The population of migratory birds included, garganey teals, shovellers, pintails, stilts, sand pipers etc. Some of the resident birds listed are coots, moorhen and terns.⁴⁶ Totally 115 species of birds have been recorded in this sanctuary.⁴⁷

Other Details⁴⁸

- a) Annual Rainfall : 1200 mm

- b) Nearest Airport : Chennai 58 km.
- c) Nearest Rly. Station : Chengalpattu 30 km.
- d) Road : Vedanthangal is a city bus terminal.
- e) Best Season : November to February
- f) Accommodation : Forest Rest House at **Vedanthangal** with catering arrangements.
- g) Authority : The Wild Life Warden,
DMS Compound,
Anna Salai,
Chennai - 600 006.

VELLODE BIRDS SANCTUARY

Vellode was declared as a birds sanctuary in 1997.⁴⁹ It is situated in the Erode District, some 12 km. from Erode on the Erode - Chennimalai Highways.⁵⁰ The total area of the sanctuary spreads over an area of 77.185 hectares. About 50 species of resident and migratory water birds visit this sanctuary. Some of the migratory and resident birds of Vellode Sanctuary are listed below.⁶¹

Painted stork, Indian darter (snake bird), egrets, coots, king fishers, adjutant stork, little cormorant, common sand piper, painted snipe, Indian river tern, open billed stork, common teal and yellow wagtail.

Another interesting feature of this birds sanctuary is the diversity of habitat types. It has tall woody acacia species, lotus patches, and aquatic grass vegetation. Clear water area and varieties of tall bushy species that offer more scope for congregation of diverse species.⁶² The watch tower with a fixed periscope is facilitating the visitors to watch the birds at a closer distance. A variety of signages along the nature trail informs the visitors about the birdlife of the sanctuary with do's and don'ts.

One thousand number of fruit bearing tall saplings have been planted to attract the terrestrial birds around the sanctuary. Many small islands are created to facilitate the feather friends for resting and nesting.⁶³ Another noteworthy point mentioning here is the birds are sighted throughout the year as sufficient water is retained during the dry period also.

Other details⁶⁴

Annual Rainfall	:	1200 mm
Nearest Airport	:	Salem 70 km. Coimbatore 90 km.
Nearest Rly. Station	:	Erode Junction 12 km.
Climate	:	Pleasant : October - January
Rainy Season	:	September - December
Ideal time to visit	:	October - February

But the Sanctuary is open to visitors throughout the year.

Entry	:	Free for all the visitors.
Accommodation	:	Available in Tamil Nadu Housing Board Guest House, Electricity Board Guest House, and Private Hotels in Erode Town.
Authority	:	District Forest Officer, Erode Forest Division, Roja Nagar, Veerappan Chatram P.O. Erode - 638 004.

THE MADRAS CROCODILE BANK - NEMMALI

This Crocodile Bank has been established with an aim to protect and conserve the endangered reptiles such as crocodiles, alligators etc.⁶⁵ Situated 14 km. from Mahabalipuram, this bank now houses more than 6 species of crocodiles.⁶⁶

VIRALIMALAI PEACOCK SANCTUARY

This small town is situated south of Tiruchirapalli⁶⁷, is bestowed with a large number of wild peacocks, which roam around the Murugan temple situated here.⁶⁸

GULF OF MANNAR MARINE NATIONAL PARK

This is a marine Bio sphere, running along the coast of Ramanathapuram and Thuthukudi Districts.⁶⁹ The entire Gulf of Mannar abounds in distinguished marine life covering, 21 Islands and 623 hectares.⁷⁰ This National park is full of coral reefs, dugong, turtles, dolphins and balano-glossus.⁷¹ **Kurusadai Islands**, situated near Mandapam boasts of a vast expanse of shallow waters.⁷² The presence of coral reef flora and fauna here are in their virgin form.⁷³ Dolphins could create euphoria to the tourists.⁷⁴

Other Details⁷⁵

- a) Annual Rainfall : 900 mm
- b) Nearest Airport : Madurai 150 km.
- c) Nearest Rly. Station : Mandapam and Tuticorin.
- d) Accommodation : Hotels at Mandapam.
- e) Other facilities : Availability of boats.

- f) Authority : The Wild Life Warden,
Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park,
76/1, Madurai Road,
Mandapam, Pin - 623 501,
Ramanathapuram District.

KANCHIRANKULAM CHITRANGUDI VETTANGUDIPATTI WATER BIRD SANCTUARIES

A grove of Barringtonia and Acacia nilotica trees in a lake form part of the sanctuary. All the three sanctuaries are situated in the Ramanathapuram District⁷⁶ and sprawling in 104 hectares, 48 hectares and 38 hectares area respectively. Breeding birds like cormorants, egrets, grey heron, ibis, teals, ducks, pelicans, white storks, pointed storks, munia, white breasted king fisher etc. visit this sanctuary.⁷⁷ The population of migratory birds include garganey teals, shovellers, pintails and sandpipers. Some of the resident birds listed are coots, moorhen, terns etc.⁷⁸ 33 species of birds have been recorded in this sanctuary.⁷⁹

In addition to this, some new water bird sanctuaries have been identified as the potential centre for Avi fauna. They include the **Vaduvoor Water Bird Sanctuary**⁸⁰ (Nagapattinam District), **Pulicot Lake Water Bird Sanctuary**⁸¹ (Tiruvellore District), **Koonthakulam Water Bird Sanctuary**⁸² (Tirunelveli District) and the **Theroor Water Bird Sanctuary**⁸³ (Kanyakumari District).

KOONTHAKULAM BIRD SANCTUARY

A tiny village in the far south, **Koonthakulam** in Tirunelveli District is emerging as a new favourite of the migratory birds.⁸⁴ It is just 38 km. away from Tirunelveli and is in the Nanguneri taluk. It may soon be catapulted into the list of popular water bird sanctuaries in the country.⁸⁵ This village is sparsely populated. Migratory birds start coming by December end and fly away to their northern homes by June or July after

they lay eggs, hatch them and the young ones grow old enough to fly with the older ones.⁸⁶ About 35 species of birds visit this calm but congenial village for breeding.⁸⁶

According to the villagers, the migratory birds have been visiting their hamlet for decades during the breeding season.⁸⁷ But it was in increase for the past three years due to the growth of babul trees planted by the **Social Forestry Department** inside the Koonthakulam tank.⁸⁸ Apart from painted storks and pelicans, lesser flamingoes are also visiting this place for breeding. The population of these winged visitors always had been in ascendancy and this shows that they are having a liking to this place. The birds come only if they are assured sufficient food and water. For fish which serve as one of the main items, the birds not only depend on **Koonthakulam tank**, or other tanks including **Vijayanarayanam** but go even to the sea-shore.⁸⁹ Painted strokes are coming from North India and East European countries to this place. Similarly the flamingoes⁹⁰ which flew in mainly from the Rann of Kutch have hatched and reared their young ones in the village. These birds do not build nests in trees but lay their eggs only in mounds of earth in the tank. In order to attract more birds throughout the year there is a proposal to plant Fig trees, Ather, Banyan, Naval (Jamoon) etc., and to provide water to the irrigation tanks in and around Koonthakulam throughout the year.⁹¹

ARIGNAR ANNA ZOOLOGICAL PARK, VANDALUR

The Government of Tamil Nadu, with a desire to establish a modern Zoological park, under the control of the Forest Department, decided to shift the animals, birds and reptiles from the Madras Corporation Zoo and rehabilitated them in the new park established at **Vandalur**⁹², in the vicinity of Chennai and at a distance of 32 km. from there. It has been established over an area of 510 hectares at an estimated cost of about rupees seven

crores.⁹³ Circular and loop roads of five kilometre length are laid inside the Zoological park. A children's park over an area of two hectares has been established at the entrance with lawns, beautiful gardens, ponds and pet animals enclosures. The entrance to the Zoological park has been beautiful by a hillock with caves and waterfalls in it.⁹⁴

The Zoological park is exhibiting 394 mammals of 54 species, 1003 birds of 98 species and 301 reptiles of 21 species. Animals, birds and reptiles are received from forests of Tamil Nadu and Zoological parks of other states. On reciprocal basis too, animals are procured from Zoological parks of other states. Nilgiri langurs and panthers, for example, were given to other zoos in charge for **Thamin Deer** and **Hog Deer** (from Mysore) **Nilgais** (from Bombay and Mysore) and **Black Swans** (from National Zoological Park New Delhi). An **Asiatic Lion** and two wild asses were brought from **Sakkarbag Zoo** and a few from **Junagath** of Gujarat state. Enclosure for lion - tailed macaque, monkey cage, deer enclosure, ungulate - enclosure, hippopotamus enclosure, bison enclosure, Zebra enclosure, rhinoceros enclosure, four crocodile ponds, 18 birds enclosure, walk through aviary and transit enclosures have been constructed. These are located in the natural surroundings with a vast area for the animals to move freely. The hippopotamus enclosure has been constructed in an area of 0.4 hectare with three moats with a capacity of 2.3 lakh gallons of water. The animals are kept in natural habitat.

The main objective with which the park functions is to breed the endangered species in this zoological parks. This park has been selected as a breeding centre for black-bucks by the Zoological survey of India¹⁰⁰ to see the animals and birds kept in natural surroundings, large number of people visit this park. Students from schools as well as colleges, turn up in large numbers to have not only a glimpse of these animals but also to learn more

about the animals and their behaviour. On holdings like Pongal Day and Republic Day, the turnout is more, sometimes, running to ten thousand to forty thousand. On normal holidays, about 6000 people and on working days about 2500 persons on an average, visit this Zoological park.¹⁰¹ Five elephants of different age groups, left in the enclosures exclusively constructed for them, give the appearance of a herd in the natural habitat. Facilities have been made to have a look at the elephant herd from the top of the water tank on the hillock. An enclosure for birds of prey has been constructed and a rare and endangered species, **European Black Vulture** is exhibited in it. In the walk through aviary, water birds are displayed. Islands for monkeys, and enclosures for chimpanzee, ungulates, lion, tigers, birds, crocodiles, otter, panther and bears have also been constructed. Tiger and gharihal from **Nandankanan Zoological Park** in Orissa, and rhinoceros from Assam and tigers from Hyderabad have been procured.¹⁰² Exotic animals like jaguars, pigomy, hippos, liamma, grey kangaroos are also displayed. The special features of this park are cave model entrance, mono-rail rope way, nocturnal animal house, prehistorical animal park, safari parks, walk through aviaries, reptile houses, prey predator concept etc.

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