

Nilgiri Biosphere Nature Park: a success story of a restoration project

About the destination: Nilgiri Biosphere Nature Park was established by the Coimbatore Zoological Park and Conservation Centre (CZPCC) in 1986 to conserve and introduce people to the great biodiversity of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. The Park is located on 70 acre land at Thuvaipathy, Anaikatti, 32 km from Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu, India. Some facilities present in the NBNP are the amphibian pond, aquarium, arboretum, herbal garden, pollinator garden, rockery, zodiac garden, amphitheatre, forest zone, educational & recreational activity area, nature trails, kid's play area, greenhouse (nursery), resting huts, and cafeteria. It is home to 300 invertebrates, 22 species of amphibians, 100 species of birds, 18 species of mammals, and 20 species of reptiles. NBNP was awarded the Gerald Durrell Memorial Award and received a Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) UK grant to establish an arboretum for the endemic and endangered plants of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve at Anaikatti in 2004.

Trip Diary: We reached at NBNP at 9 am. A 150-year-old Banyan tree welcomed us. That was the only tree that existed

before restoration of the park. Mr. Kandaswamy, a botanist from NBNP guided us through our tour. He showed us the apiculture area and demonstrated some techniques used in apiculture. As the park hosts various species of native flowering trees, it is a good place for honey production. Then we visited the open-air butterfly garden. Twenty-seven species of butterflies are recorded so far from that butterfly garden. It was good to know that just planting the right native plant can attract butterflies.

We encountered Striped Tiger *Danaus genutia*, Plain Tiger *Danaus chrysippus*, Dark Blue Tiger *Tirumala septentrionis*, Blue Tiger *Tirumala limniace*, Common Crow *Euploea core*, and Double Branded Crow *Euploea Sylvester*. After that we visited a artificial pond what was developed for turtle and frogs. We travelled through the entire park. During the walk, Kandaswamy introduced us to many trees and their economic or ethno medicinal values. We saw *Xylia xylocarpa* that was used for making railway sleeper, Devil's Tree or *Alstonia scholaris*, Red Silk Cotton whose dried fruit have cotton which used for making pillow, *Hydnocarpus pentandra* whose seed oils is used for leprosy treatment, Monkey Tree *Calophyllum inophyllum* whose dry fruit is used as

mosquito repellent, *Dalbergia latifolia* or Rosewood, *Streblus asper* whose leaves are identical to sand paper, *Acacia leucophloea* whose bark is used to make local alcohol, lemon grass, rosemary, sprout leaf plant, sea lettuce tree, *Butea monosperma* or Flame of the Forest, Fishtail Palm *Caryota urens*, black pearl tree, star apple, *Rauvolfia serpentina*, pepper mint, *Phyllanthus niruri*, *Cycas circinalis* gymnosperm, *Santalum album* or Indian Sandalwood, among others. The park also had small huts at regular intervals which not only provide temporary resting place but also had interactive educational and informational boards and carvings to give more insights on biodiversity of the area. After that we went to the recreational or kids play area where we spent some time. There was a tree house which used for bird-watching.

We spent some time at the cafeteria for food. Before heading back we visited the medicinal plant garden which has

various types of medicinal herbs and shrubs. It also has a Miyawaki forest which is a technique to plant maximum plants in a little urban space.

Conclusion: Often restoration projects in India fail as those projects lack scientific approach. NBNP is a success story showing how scientific approach based on knowledge of local biodiversity help in restoring large area. This restoration project reduced human-elephant negative interaction in nearby villages as it provides alternative food source for elephants. It also provides a corridor and refuge for various ungulates and birds. We can say NBNP is a celebration of conservation efforts.

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