

SITE INSPECTION REPORT OF DEPUTY DIRECTOR, SRIVILLIPUTHUR - MEGAMALAI TIGER RESERVE (SMTR), SRIVILLIPUTHUR

I inspected the area proposed for diversion on 29.11.2022 along with Forest Range Officer, Saptur; Forester (Saptur and Maharajapuram section); two forest guards; Executive officer HR&CE Department and AE and EE from PWD department. The area requested by user agency for formation of hand rails on the path via Thaniparai to Sundaramahalingam temple is 0.0264 ha. The hand rails are proposed to be constructed in five locations (Valukkuparai, Sangiliparai, Konathalaivasal, Irattailingam medu and Navaloothu medu). All the five proposed locations fall inside core area (Saptur beat 5 of Saptur Range) of SMTR, Srivilliputhur.

1. ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE PROPOSED SITE FOR DIVERSION

- a. Part of Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve
- b. Part of Agasthiyar Biosphere Landscape
- c. Part of elephant reserve No. 7
- d. Erstwhile Grizzled Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary

2. AREA DESCRIPTION AND ITS IMPORTANCE

The Srivilliputhur Megamalai Tiger Reserve (SMTR), Srivilliputhur is situated in the Southern Western Ghats of Tamilnadu and falling in the revenue districts of Virudhunagar and Madurai between North latitude 090 23' 38" to 090 49' 51" N and between longitude 770 21' 51" to 770 47' 20" E. Forest area with an extent of 476.65 Sq Km was declared as a wildlife sanctuary in G.O. Ms. 399 Environment and Forests (FR.V), dated: 26-12-1988 and subsequently it was made a part of SMTR Vide G.O. (Ms) No. 14 Environment and Forests (FR.5) Department, dated: 08.02.2021. SMTR, Srivilliputhur is one of the best habitats for tiger, nilgiri tahr, grizzled squirrel elephant and other rare wildlife (Table 1) in Southern Western Ghats.

Arulmigu Sundaramahalingam temple belonging to Hindu Religious and Empowerment Department is located in Saptur RF of SMTR, Srivilliputhur as enclosure. The area under S.F .No.517 measuring an extent of 63.76 acres (28.80 hect) is being treated as patta of saduragirimahalingasamy temple (Trustee Kulanthaiyananthasamy) which is under the control of the Hindu Religious and charitable Endownments Board. The enclosure is a part eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) of

Grizzledsquirrel Wildlife Sanctuary. This temple is situated at about 900 M above MSL and located 5.5 Km from the entrance of Thaniparai via admitted foot path, out of which 4.75 Km passes through forest area. Every year around 3 lakh pilgrims visit these temples. Public allowed through permitted footpath starting from Thaniparai between 6 AM to 4 PM only on full moon, new moon and Pradosam days. As per the directions of Hon'ble Madurai Bench of Madras High Court in its order dated 27.03.2019 in WP (MD) No. 6400 of 2019, a special committee was formed to fix carrying capacity of the Sanctuay in respect of pilgrims to be permitted to visit Arulmigu Sundaramahalingam. Accordingly, carrying capacity with respect to the temple was fixed at 2778 pilgrims/ day on normal pilgrim days and 15,624 pilgrims /day on special Adi amavasai pilgrim days.

Table1. List of important fauna found Saptur Reserve Forest, Srivilliputhur Megamalai Tiger Reserve, Srivilliputhur

Sl. no	Species	Schedule in Wildlife Protection Act	IUCN conservation Status
1.	Tiger	Schedule I (Part I)	Endangered
2.	Elephant	Schedule I (Part I)	Endangered
3.	Nilgiri Thar	Schedule I (Part I)	Endangered
4.	Grizzled Giant Squirrel	Schedule I (Part I)	Vulnerable
5.	Common Langur	Schedule II (part I)	Least concern
6.	Leopard	Schedule I (Part I)	Vulnerable
7.	Dholes	Schedule II (Part I)	Endangered
8.	Slender Loris	Schedule I (Part I)	Endangered
9.	Indian Gaur	Schedule I (Part I)	Vulnerable
10.	Sambar	Schedule III	Vulnerable
11.	Chital	Schedule III	Least concern
12.	Jungle Cat	Schedule II (Part I)	Not applicable
13.	Small Indian Civet	Schedule II (Part I)	Least concern
14.	Common Plam Civet	Schedule II (Part I)	Least concern
15.	Brown Palm Civet	Schedule II (Part I)	Least concern
16.	Common Mongoose	Schedule II (Part I)	Least concern
17.	Stripe necked Mongoose	Schedule II (Part I)	Least concern

18.	Sloth Bear	Schedule I (Part I)	Vulnerable
19.	Ruddy mongoose	Schedule II (Part I)	Least concern
20.	Mouse deer	Schedule I	Least concern
21.	Barking deer	Schedule III	Least concern
22.	Wild pig	Schedule III	Least concern
23.	Indian Pangolin	Schedule I (Part I)	Endangered
24.	Star tortoise	Schedule IV	Vulnerable
25.	Indian Porcupine	Schedule IV	Least concern
26.	Monitor Lizard	Schedule I	Least concern
27.	Changeable hawk eagle	Schedule I (Part III)	Least concerned
28.	Serpent eagle	Schedule I (Part III)	Least concerned
29.	Eagle owl	Schedule IV	Least concerned
30.	Jungle owlet	Schedule I (Part III)	Least concerned
31.	Indian scops owl	Schedule IV	Least concerned
32.	Emerald dove	Schedule IV	Least concerned
33.	Great Indian Hornbills	Schedule I (Part III)	Vulnerable
34.	Peafowl	Schedule I (Part III)	Least concern
35.	Grey jungle fowl	Schedule II (Part II)	Least concern
36.	Spectacled cobra	Schedule II (Part II)	Least concern
37.	Rat snake	Schedule II (Part II)	Least concern
38.	Indian krait	Schedule IV	Least concern

3. LOCATIONS OF STEEL BRIDGES AND IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS

Sl. No	Locations	Observations
1.	Valukkuparai Lat: 9.713056 Long: 77.6275	This location consist of huge granite rock which has been wedged and chiseled to form small path way of about 2 – 2.5 meter width. On the right side of the path as one climbs up the hill, the rock dips at 40 degree slope to form right bank of Mangani odai.
2.	Sangiliparai Lat: 9.716944 Long: 77.626667	This is a huge linear granite rock on which steps are carved near Sengiliparai odai. Slope of this rock is about 30 degree.

3.	Konathalaivasal Lat: 9.718056 Long: 77.628611	Konathalaivasal is a steep slope of about 60 degrees with hairpin bend.
4.	Irattailingam medu Lat: 9.723333 Long: 77.635833	This is also a huge granite rock which drops acutely on the left side as one travels uphill. A small seasonal stream crosses the rock midway.
5.	Navaloothu medu Lat: 9.726111 Long: 77.638611	Navaloothu is also a linear granite rock. A small seasonal stream crosses the rock midway.

4. General observations

The site proposed for formation of hand rails is home for several endangered species as mentioned above (Table 1). Although, project causes minimal damage to flora and fauna, it will ensure safety of pilgrims. The project site does not have any important monuments which has archaeological importance/ heritage site/ defence establishment etc.


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