



MANYAM

A NEWSLETTER ON THE EASTERN GHATS

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2 The Eastern Ghats are home to diverse habitat types, and the biological diversity of the landscape reflects this diversity. In this fifth issue of Manyam, we bring to you some articles highlighting the biological diversity of the Eastern Ghats, the lifestyles and livelihoods of the communities inhabiting the landscape and an update on the bauxite mining issue in the northern Eastern Ghats.

lifestyles are threatened by the Polavaram dam project across the Godavari.

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Bauxite mining has been threatening the ecologically sensitive northern Eastern Ghats over the past two decades. We provide an update on the National Green Tribunal (NGT) ruling on the need for fresh environmental approval for bauxite mining in Visakhapatnam.

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3 Syed Subhani talks about the traditional lifestyles and livelihoods of the Koya indigenous tribes that live in the hills and valleys of the northern Eastern Ghats across Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Chhattisgarh, and how their livelihoods and traditional

Concluding on a high note, we report the discovery of a new plant species *Emilia reddyi* from the northern Eastern Ghats last month, and the population distribution of the threatened Yellow-throated bulbul across the Eastern Ghats from genetic analysis.

**NEW PLANT SPECIES
DISCOVERED IN
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4 We hope these articles introduce you to some interesting aspects of the biodiversity of the Eastern Ghats

- Vikram Aditya

**YELLOW THROATED
BULBUL IN THE
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CONSERVING RESIDENT BIRDS IN KORAPUT |

RANJIT K. SAHU AND BIDYUT MOHANTY

The dwindling population of birds in the sensitive Eastern Ghats hills of Koraput district in Odisha is becoming a cause for concern. While the vanishing of sparrows is quite perceptible, those of other birds residing in the jungles of the Ghats is not. Large scale introduction of eucalyptus and other monoculture plantations across the Eastern Ghats, deforestation and conversion of forests to farmlands is affecting bird populations.

The next important step would be to prevent the pollution of areas where they reside. Rapid urbanization and noise pollution is a great cause for concern as this interferes with the birds' life cycle. Apart from this, electric wires, lights and other modern amenities in cities have their own profound affect during migration or breeding. While development would neglect birds as a small factor it is important to realize that with birds vanishing from ecosystems, a critical component would be lost. Increased incidences of insect vector transmitted diseases are likely to increase. While pollution in cities may have very few check points, effective steps can be taken to counter it by preventing degradation of rural and suburban ecosystems that provide a refuge to birds. The increasing use of pesticides in agricultural areas could lead to possible intake by birds while feeding on insect pests can cause death of the birds. These have to be studied in detail and awareness built among the people. The establishment of industries that release their effluent into water bodies is also a growing concern.

The use of plastic is increasing daily and bits of plastic can be eaten by birds leading to their death or death of the nestlings. If a parent bird dies in the midst of raising her chicks, the chicks die too. Recycling any plastic is one effective way to prevent this type of unintentional bird death.

Incorporating multiple layered plantation crops into silviculture systems may help provide birds with canopy cover at various



Egrets in paddy fields that have clean water source

heights for their successful nesting and breeding. Educating local people, students and formation of local societies of bird lovers, creating tour groups to learn about local birds and nature with school children, may be an effective way to monitor birds and prevent poaching. Creating awareness about importance of birds' to local people and farmers is also an effective strategy to accomplish this objective. With forest lands and trees vanishing due to rapid urbanization, it is important to provide artificial places (bird houses or nests on trees) and natural habitats where birds can roost. Planting native species around agricultural lands is important as these trees have better survival rates, are easily acclimatized to local conditions and the birds are familiar to these trees.

-Dr. Ranjit K. Sahu (Ph.D biotechnology, B,Sc (Ag)) is Research Associate Scientist at UVA, Virginia, USA and is a freelance writer with interest in health, environment, education and sustainability.

-Bidyut Mohanty is the Secretary of SPREAD, Koraput, Odisha.

“The ingestion of agricultural pests laden with pesticide in farmlands can cause deaths is to be avoided in these regions....The establishment of industries that release their effluent into water bodies is also a big concern”

THE KOYAS OF THE NORTHERN EASTERN GHATS | SYED SUBHANI

Ever wondered what is life like in a tribal community living in remote villages surrounded by forests? And challenges posed by 'development' to the very existence of the communities struggling to live in harmony with nature? This is the experience of Mr. Syed Subhani, Director of ASHA, of working with the Koyas. The Koya tribes inhabit the Schedule 5 areas of the East and West Godavari, Khammam in the northern section of the Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh, along with Warangal and Adilabad districts. The Koyas call themselves as Dorala Sattam (Lord's Group) and Putta Dora (Original Lords) or Koitor in their own language. They are further divided into several functional, endogamous groups who are in turn divided into several exogamous Phratries. Each Phratry is again divided into several clans. The Godavari and its tributary Sabari River flowing through their habitation exercise a profound influence on Koyas' economic, social and cultural life.

Some of them have forgotten their language and adopted Telugu. Woman are industrious and an economic asset to the family. A woman attends to all agriculture operations except ploughing besides domestic work. They have mainly settled cultivators and grow Jowar, Finger Millet (Raagi) and Pearl Millet (Bajra). Those living in midst of forest collect Minor Forest Produce and sell in the markets.

Their main festivals are Vijji Pandum (seeds charming festival) and Kondala Kolupu (festival to appease Hill deities). The most important fair celebrated is the Sammakka Saralamma Jatra once in two years on full moon day of the Magha Masam in January or February at Medaram village in Warangal district. They perform a colorful dance called Permakok (Bison horn dance) during festivals and marriage ceremonies. Men wear Bison Horns and Skirts for the performance beating a cylindrical Drum rhythmically. Women form a circle by holding each other's hands over their shoulders singing and dancing.

The Koyas face serious threat of displacement under the controversial Polavaram Dam project currently under construction across the Godavari in the Ghats. An example of the impacts of displacement is the plight of the Gotti Koya people who are displaced by violence from their homes in neighboring Chhattisgarh. Some of them sought rehabilitation in Reserve Forests of neighboring Khammam and Warangal districts. There is no proper drinking water, roads, electricity and transportation facility for these Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) settlements. The Koyas face a similar plight when the Polavaram dam is completed.

- Syed Subhani is Founder and Director of ASHA, based in Chintur, East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh

RETHINK ON BAUXITE MINING LEASES | RAVI REBBAPREGADA, SAMATA

The National Green Tribunal (NGT), New Delhi has directed the proponents of the bauxite mining project in the Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh to approach the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) again for considering afresh the project, including the requirement of Public Hearings. This is also to relook at fresh grant of environmental clearances for mining lease by the Andhra Pradesh Mineral Development Corporation (APMDC), if they wish to pursue bauxite mining in the Eastern Ghats again.

The original mining leases were accorded by the APMDC to ANRAK Aluminium Limited and Jindal South West for supply of bauxite ore from the Jerrela block near Chintapalle in Visakhapatnam district about ten years ago in 2007. However, the project became mired in controversy and opposition from people's movements and environmental groups since the beginning, resulting in the non-commencement of any mining activities thereafter.

The then government of Andhra Pradesh had already cancelled the bauxite ore supply agreement with ANRAK. The latest NGT order, heard on the 20th of July 2017 came in the backdrop of an arbitration filed by the proponents against the Union of India seeking compensa-



tion on the investment of US \$44.71 million, in response to a petition filed by Samata, an environmental and social organization (SAMATA Vs UNION OF INDIA, Appeal no 145 of 2015). The NGT issued the order taking into account the facts that clearances were 10 years ago and the project had not commenced, and the Government of Andhra Pradesh had already cancelled

the bauxite ore supply agreement with ANRAK. The apex court also stated that "...the MoEF should consult the petitioners (Samata) before taking any key decision in this regard." It also stated that any new proposal for mining should be considered afresh and due clearances have to be obtained.

- Ravi Rebbapregada is Founder and Director of Samata, based in Visakhapatnam district, Andhra Pradesh

**NEW PLANT SPECIES DISCOVERED
IN EASTERN GHATS** | ADAPTED FROM
THE HINDU, 17 APRIL, 2017

A new plant species has been discovered from the Galikonda hill region, located in the Araku valley area of the northern Eastern Ghats of Visakhapatnam district, Andhra Pradesh. The plant has been named *Emilia reddyi*.

A researcher of the Forest and Ecology group of the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), Hyderabad, K. V. Satish, and faculty of the Department of Botany of Andhra University, J. Prakasa Rao, stumbled upon the plant while carrying out field studies on the biodiversity of the hill, located at 1,245 m.a.sl.. Belonging to the family of *Asteraceae*, the plant with light violet plum-coloured flowers blossoms between September and February. An article reporting the discovery was published in *Journal of Asia-Pacific Biodiversity*, in May 2016.

The botanical name *Emilia reddyi*, is given after NRSC scientist C. Sudhakar Reddy. The plant has been deposited in the herbarium of the Andhra University and the Central National Herbarium, Kolkata.

During the studies, only 70 *Emilia reddyi* plants were found in a area of 22.6 ha on the Galikonda hill. Through ISRO satellite imagery analysis, it has been estimated that it can grow in the vicinity in 2,612.1 ha. Unlike the Himalayas and Western Ghats, the Eastern Ghats are largely unexplored and the plant is endemic to the area. According to criteria of the International Union for Conservation of Nature for new species, this plant is under the 'critically endangered' category. Authors expressed apprehension that increasing agricultural expansion, rapid spread of alien species and expansion of coffee plantations and the proposed commencement of bauxite mining on and around the Galikonda hill may pose a severe threat not only to the new species but to the endemic species of the Araku Valley and its biodiversity.

**YELLOW THROATED BULBUL IN THE
EASTERN GHATS** | ADAPTED FROM LIVE
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The Researchers Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology—Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species (CCMB-LaCONES), Hyderabad, have identified populations of the Yellow-throated Bulbul across the central and southern Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The Yellow-throated Bulbul is found in rocky scrub forests and is classified as Vulnerable by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

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