



Conservation of the Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest of South India

Overview

The project has been in motion since the beginning of June 2021, we have mobilized the required staff to undertake the initial work load, made purchases of some of the capital items such as computer, vehicles and the camera for the digital herbarium.

Biodiversity Surveys

The initial work of collating and reviewing previous survey work carried out between 1994 and 2004 for 60 Sacred Groves was carried out.

Based on this data, a plan was drawn to conduct a rapid assessment survey of the sites with the objective to assess their current health and compare them to the previous studies, with a view of setting the parameters for the more in-depth studies to follow. This rapid assessment survey work has been initiated, at present the team has logged 23 site visits (2 new undocumented sites) within 2 geographical Zones, Cuddalore and South Cuddalore.

Specific Objective 1

Baseline Actions A

Field Action A

Map of Sacred Grove locations visited to date



For each grove the previous information is assessed and the area is then explored to find indicators of its present state. As the more detailed analysis has yet to be completed, so far it seems about 30% are in a more degraded state, 50% are in a similar state and 20% seem well protected and undisturbed (through the vegetation such as lianas and creepers have become more dominate). These are only tentative findings as each geographical group will differ considerably.

Table of Sacred Groves that have had the Rapid Assessment to date

Sarced Grove Name	Size (ha)	Sample of field Comments
Arasadikuppam	0.46	long narrow, highly cut and loped, large L.tetraphla
Athiyallur1	0.09	Highly disturbed...only one large L.tetraphyla present
Athiyallur2	0.25	low canopy, disturbed, large P.suberifolium
Cinnakumatti 1	N/A	small clump - to be documented
Cinnakumatti 2	2.2	Fairly protected, some very large specimens
Konjikuppam	4.14	disturbed but with some large specimen trees, Ebony present- little regen
Kothattai	18.7	sand dune grove, encroachment under control, one large dense area high canopy
Kulanthaikuppam	2.79	Protected with good regeneration
Melvadakuthu	2.1	Disturbed, cutting and loping, Large A.amara, C.trifoliata regen.
Muthanai	4.32	Disturbed, cutting and loping, limited species, combretum dominate.
Paalvathunnam	3.83	some closed canopy areas with good ebony and drypetes regeneration.
Periyakumatti	1.25	Denied access
Pudur	1.47	superb protected grove, mature Ebonies with regen. + C.trifoliata
Puthupallayam	1.22	grove taken over by school, clearing and planting of exotics present
Ramapuram	7.3	fairly degraded grove, browsing, dominant in P. alatum
S Pudur	7.06	well preserved, large specimen of Tricalysia, good regen.
Sendirakillai	3.52	Fairly intact grove, many mature specimens and regen
Suriyanpet	3	fairly degraded with cutting , some large specimen trees
T Puthupallayam	0.53	Protected with good regeneration
Thirumannikuzhi	1.26	very protected and overgrown, lots of creepers, very large L. acidissima
Thondamanatham	1.55	possible encroachment, low canopy, no emergents
Vandikuppam	0.39	new cleared area, 300 year old grove, interesting 2 clumps close by
Varakkalpattu	0.68	large clearing, only large specimen trees left with some scrub regrowth

Specific Objective 2

Baseline Actions A

Field Action A & D

For each Grove the GIS technician created a geo-referenced shape file for mapping analysis.



As well as the above, during the visits the field assistants were checking plants for flowering and seeding specimens, along with geo-referencing and measuring particularly rare or large species specimens. Also, the authorities of the groves were contacted whenever possible, as a courtesy measure and to gain a deeper insight into the history of the grove.

Field Staff collecting seeds, investigating flowering trees and measuring large specimens.



Specific Objective 3

Baseline Actions A

Field Action A & B

Conservation of the TDEF

Work for this year's plantation program in the AV forests has begun, a species analysis was carried out to identify and create an appropriate species target list for the project. Sites have been identified, and seedling availability has been assessed – with advances given to the Auroville nurseries for the seedlings. The planting and aftercare protocol has been established to ensure maximum survival rates. A monitoring regime in line with our other international planting projects has been put into place. The physical work will start in September and we will be planting 10,000 saplings in around 25 acres of land, concentrating on the Northern side of the Auroville Greenbelt.

Meetings have been held with the District Collector, the District Forest Officer, and the Chief Education Officer to inform them of the project and to

Specific Objective 6

Field Action A, B & C

ask for their approval for the project's activities such as plantation work and school visits to the botanical garden. Subsequently all of the Block Education Officers have visited the gardens for an awareness program about the project and its aims.

Increase Awareness of TDEF

Funds from the project have been used to self-publish the identification book about South India Trees, and these copies are being distributed to raise awareness of the project and to encourage people to learn about the trees and shrubs of the forest.

*Trees of South
India – Authored
by Auroville
Botanical Garden*

