

CHINNAR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

This was formed during the year 1984.

Location and extent : Chinnar wild life sanctuary is located in the rain shadow region of the Western Ghats , in the Idukki district, 60 Km away from the major tourist center Munnar. It covers an area of 90.422 sq. km which extends 77° 15' and 77° 17' East Longitude and 10° 15' and 10°21' North Latitude.

Temperature : Temperature varies from 18°C to 25°C. The plains are generally hot but the higher altitudes are cool.

Rainfall: The sanctuary is situated in the rain shadow region of the Western Ghats, getting rains mostly during the north-east monsoons (October-December). Average annual rainfall is 500mm.

Topography: The terrain is highly undulating with altitudes ranging from 500m at Chinnar to over 2300m at Nandala Malai. Major Peaks in the Sanctuary are Kottakombumalai (2144 m), Vellaikal malai (1863 m) and Viriyoottu malai (1845m)

Drainage and rivers : The area is drained by two perennial rivers namely Pambar and Chinnar

Flora : The habitat types range from high altitude shoal-grassland to dry thorny scrub. The major portion of the area is covered with grass lands. There were also several patches of shoals. The sanctuary has the unique thorny scrub forest with xerophytic species. It has about 1000 species of flowering plants and is a well known repository of medicinal plants. There are 114 endemics and *Aibizia lathamii*, a critically endangered tree has been recently reported from the dry frosts. The major species in the thorny scrub forests are *Acacia arabica*, *Acacia leucofolia*, *Acacia concinna*, *Prosopis juliflora*, and *Opuntia dillenii*. Dry deciduous species include *Santallum album*, *Anogeissus latifolia*, *Terminalia arjuna*, *Tamarindus indica*, *Pongamia glabra*, *Dalbergia latifolia*, *Tectona grandis*, *Lagerstroemia laneolata*, *Cassia fistula*, *Terminalia bellerica*, *Emblica officianalis* etc. High shoal and wetland species include *Rhododendron nilagiricum*, *Elaeocarpus recurvatus*, *Strobilanthes kunthianus* etc.

Fauna : It is an abode of reptilian fauna and the richest in Kerala in terms of the number of species. 34 species of mammals, 225 sp. of birds, 36 species of reptiles, 22 species of amphibians and 42 species of fishes are reported from the sanctuary. Elephant, Gaur, panther, spotted deer, Sambar, Grizzled giant squirrel, Hanuman monkey etc are the common mammals. The riverine forests support a healthy population of the endangered Grizzled Giant Squirrel, the pride of Chinnar. It is the second habitat for the endangered Grizzled giant squirrel in India. Chinnar has recorded the largest number of reptilian fauna in Kerala including the mugger crocodile. With 225 recorded species of birds, it is one of the richest areas of south India in avian diversity. The famous 'white bison of Manjampatti' has been recently reported from Chinnar. Other important mammals found are tiger, leopard, guar, sambar, spotted deer, Nilgiri tar, common langur, bonnet macaque etc. The phenomenon of butterfly migration occurs in between the monsoons. In association with the neighbouring Protected areas, Chinnar forms part of a viable conservation unit.

Ecotourism : All the Ecotourism activities are organised jointly by the Forest Department and the Ecodevelopment Committees (EDCs) of the local tribal communities. The activities are designed to offer a wide spectrum of wilderness opportunities to the visitors and to provide means of sustainable livelihood for local communities.

Ecotourism Facilities include

1. River trekking.
2. Trekking to the cultural site(dolmens)
3. Nature trail to the watch tower.
4. Trek to Thoovanam falls.
5. Interpretation activities and medicinal Garden.
6. Tree house at Chinnar.
7. Machans at Koottar, Karakkad and Champakkad.
8. Trekking and camping at Vasyappara.