

TAMIL NADU

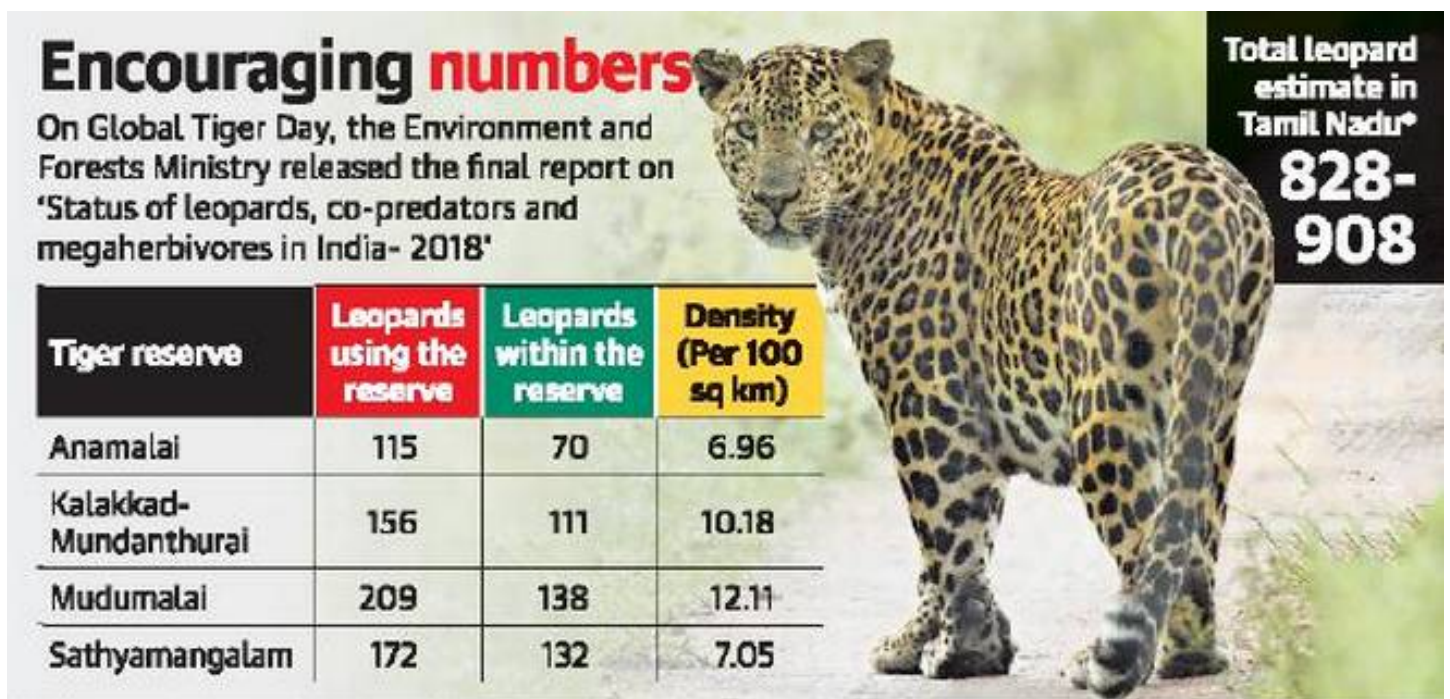
# Srivilliputhur sanctuary has the highest leopard density in Western Ghats: report

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CHENNAI, JULY 31, 2021 01:21 IST

UPDATED: JULY 31, 2021 01:21 IST

**Tamil Nadu has 828-908 leopards with good density in all the tiger reserves**



\*2018 population estimates with standard error limits

The Srivilliputhur Grizzled Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu has the highest leopard density (per 100 sq km), not just in the State but in the entire Western Ghats landscape. The population of leopards in the State is in the range of 828-908.

The data is based on the final report on the 'Status of Leopards, Co-predators and Megaherbivores in India - 2018', released by the Environment and Forests Ministry on Global Tiger Day 2021.

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yielded 2,017 pictures of 629 leopards. The 2014 report pegged its population at 815 with a range of 587-1,043. An additional number of 100 sq km grids sampled in 2018 was 29, out of which four had leopard presence. The density of leopards in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve was 12.11. In parts of Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve, the number stood at 7.05. Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve supported high density of leopards with 10.18, the report said.

Surprisingly, Srivilliputhur Grizzled Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary had the highest leopard density of 20.43 in the entire Western Ghats landscape. The squirrel sanctuary, combined with Meghamalai Wildlife Sanctuary, is now a tiger reserve. The report noted that the growing human population and increasing fragmentation of the landscape had increased human-wildlife interactions. The coffee-tea estates and other commercial plantations surrounded by forests were frequently occupied by leopards and were major hubs for human-leopard conflicts in Tamil Nadu, it pointed out. "It is a surprise to us," said T.S. Subramaniya Raja of the Wildlife Association of Rajapalayam. "We have often heard villagers in the foothills of the sanctuary saying they spotted leopards now and then," he recalled.

A section of watchers and guards also confirmed that they regularly spotted leopards. "The leopards keep to the boundaries and stroll inside the forests. So there have not been any major conflicts with the human population outside the forests," said Mr. Raja.

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"A focused tiger management will help in co-predator balancing. Leopards remain prone to poaching. Protection has to be strategic and strong to sustain the populations," said Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Chief Wildlife Warden, Tamil Nadu.

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Printable version | Feb 9, 2022 12:01:30 PM |

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/srivilliputhur-sanctuary-has-the-highest-leopard-density-in-western-ghats-report/article35642692.ece>

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