

Madayipara's deep blue flower bloom thrills tourists but faces environmental threats

Madayipara, which boasts around 300 different plant species, attracts a variety of pollinators, including bees and butterflies, which are essential for the reproduction of many plants. The area is under threat due to increasing encroachment and irresponsible behaviour of tourists who drive into the grasslands and litter food waste, plastic bottles.

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THE HINDU BUREAU



Madayipara, a storehouse of biodiversity, has transformed into a mesmerising carpet of deep blue flowers. However, overcrowding is posing a threat to the pristine ecosystem. | Photo Credit: C.P. Sajit

As the heavy rains of the Malayalam month of Karkadakam sweep through the region, Madayipara, a storehouse of biodiversity, has transformed into a mesmerising carpet of deep blue flowers. The vibrant blooms of *Utricularia*, along with the white flower heads

of *Eriocaulon* and *Rhamphicarpa*, paint the entire plateau in stunning shades of blue, violet, and white.

Madayipara, renowned for its unique ecosystem, hosts an array of flora including the predatory plant *Drosera indica*, Mukutti (*Biophytum sensitivum*), and Vishnukranti (*Evolvulus alsinoides*). These blooms emerge amidst herbaceous plants such as *Sopubia trifida*, *Lindernia*, *Polygala elongata*, *Justicia japonica*, and *Leucas* species. Despite the relentless rain, tourists continue to flock to this natural haven.

The top of this ancient and serene laterite plateau in Kannur attracts numerous tourists and research students who come to observe and study its rich biodiversity. Madayipara is also a favoured spot for migratory birds, adding to its allure for nature enthusiasts.

The flowering season is a critical time for Madayipara's ecosystem. The flowers attract a variety of pollinators, including bees and butterflies, which are essential for the reproduction of many plants. Additionally, the area becomes a feasting ground for migratory birds, further enhancing its ecological significance.



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Boasting around 300 different plant species, Madayipara becomes a floral treasure trove during Onam, with children travelling long distances to collect native flowers.

Muhamed Jafer Palot of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), who has studied the richness of Madayipara's flora and fauna, stated that although the hillock represents less than 0.01% of Kannur district, it harbours 58.75% of the district's flora. The fauna recorded from the area includes 142 butterfly species, 186 bird species (including 20

reported for the first time in the state), 60 species of odonates, 24 species of reptiles, and 19 species of amphibians, including rare and endangered ones.

Looming threat

However, this natural beauty is under threat due to increasing encroachment and irresponsible tourist behaviour. Environmentalist K.V. Chandramgadan highlighted that visitors driving their vehicles onto the grasslands and littering the area with food waste and plastic bottles are causing significant damage. This irresponsible behaviour not only mars the pristine beauty of Madayipara but also poses a severe threat to its delicate ecosystem. The balance of flora and fauna is at risk, prompting urgent calls for better conservation efforts to protect this biodiversity hotspot.

Visitors amidst the annual deep blue bloom of Madayipara in Kannur on Sunday. | Photo Credit: Sajit C.P.

Mr. Chandramgadan emphasised that these flowers will not bloom in a polluted environment. They require pleasant weather, unpolluted air, and water. Good rainfall is essential, and in its absence last year, the flowers did not bloom. He also noted that the Kerala High Court had directed the District Police Chief and Pazhyangadi Station House Officer to ensure the protection of the laterite hills by preventing people from entering the large landscape. However, this order was followed for a few years, but patrolling has since ceased, leading to a negative impact on the flora and fauna of the region.

The annual deep blue bloom of Madayipara is a natural wonder that underscores the region's ecological richness. While it continues to draw admiration from visitors, there is an urgent need for conservation efforts to protect this unique landscape from environmental degradation. By promoting responsible tourism and implementing strict regulations, Madayipara can remain a pristine haven for biodiversity and a breathtaking sight for generations to come.

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