

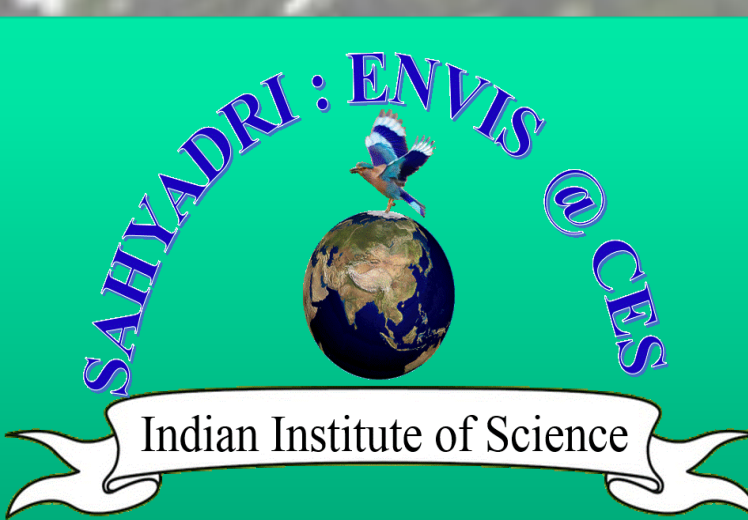


सत्यमेव जयते



RELIC FORESTS OF CENTRAL WESTERN GHATS: *KATHALEKAN* SWAMP FOREST IN KARNATAKA

Rare biodiversity in just 2.25 sq. km



The lineage of Western Ghats vegetation goes to the Gondwanaland. The entry of first farmers 3500 years ago marked onset of forest clearances below 1000 m for shifting cultivation. Long fallows and thin population favoured return of the evergreens mingled with deciduous timber trees like teak and rosewood. The early farmers also spared stretches of the original wilderness rich in endemics, and perennial streams in devotion to gods.

Damp, shaded and floor covered in mouldy litter the sacred forests produced black pepper, cardamom and cinnamon, traded with Caesars' Rome, Venice, Arabia and China bringing prosperity to Peninsular India. Trees were not cut but non-timber products collection was not taboo. Sacred forests were repositories of rare plants and animals.

With British domination of Western Ghats from early 19th century communities lost control over forests including sacred groves, which got merged in secondary forests. British and post-British periods saw timber harvests and even clear-felling and conversion of many sacred groves into tree monocultures.

Among the many climax forest relics that we located the profile of Kathalekan (*Kathale*=dark; *kan*= sacred forest) is presented. This relic forest is in Uttara Kannada District, of Central Western Ghats in Karnataka. More primary forest relics with their rare biota requires to be rediscovered.



2.25² km relic forest & 35 Amphibians



2.25 km² study area of relic forest.

Open patches are grasslands, past shifting cultivation fallows yet to be closed under forest succession and darker areas are *Myristica* swamps

Wild nutmegs: Gifts from the Gondwana - land



Myristica magnifica,
Endangered swamp nutmeg tree
(aril covered seed)



Gymnacranthera canarica:
Vulnerable swamp tree of nutmeg family



Primal harmony in the forest



A forest of Dipterocarps & swamps



Syzygium travancoricum,
Critically Endangered tree- new discovery in Central Western Ghats



Semecarpus kathalekanensis:
New tree species from mango family



Madhuca bourdillonii:
Critically Endangered tree- new discovery

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