

## Mahavir Harina Vanasthali National Park's vibrant biodiversity

Treat in store Mahavir Harina Vanasthali National Park | Photo Credit: [G RAMAKRISHNA](#)

Most of us rue the stress caused by the concrete jungle that we all live in. Yet if we look around, nature is present in the neighbourhood. These green spaces go a long way in creating and maintaining a thriving biodiversity. One such spot is Mahavir Harina Vanasthali National Park in Vanasthalipuram, a home for chital-the spotted deer, black buck, antelopes, python, butterflies, porcupine, doves, wild boar, hare and different species of birds. The highlight is the deer conservation at the Park.

“It is a wild jungle amidst a concrete jungle,” states forest range officer Ravinder Reddy. You tend to agree with him — a trip to the park is like exploring a small jungle. “This space is a natural habitat for the deer; apparently this was a hunting spot for Nizams,” he shares as we board a van for the safari trip. K Swamy, who conducts nature camps and awareness sessions for school students points out the speciality. “The leaves of deciduous trees fall in autumn and with a change of season, the leaves are back. It is a sight to see the lush green landscape during the rainy reason.”

The first thing that strikes you as you look at the trees is its bare, wild look, sans any leaves. As you wait impatiently, a chital with delicate and expressive eyes runs around. “Many children do not know the difference between antelopes and spotted deer. We help them to identify,” states Swamy.

If you are lucky, there is a treat in store to view. A group of chital drift through the grasslands and come to huddle at one place. “These sub-adults (a term for young) maintain bachelor groups,” adds Swamy. While the deer are also translocated because of over-population, a walking track is a recent addition. Apart from small natural water bodies, water cemented holes (2 ft) have been created to quench their thirst, especially for use during summer.

The park is frequented by families who bring their children to discover the animal world. It is also teeming with crowds during the holy Karthika *maasam*. Also, with 17 engineering colleges in the vicinity of 15 km of the park, youngsters head here to chill out with friends.

“We conduct different competitions during the Wildlife Week from October 2 to 8. Friends of Snakes Society also conducts snake shows; we find the students are curious to know more about all these animals,” shares Swami.

However, the park is hit by the littering menace. “People do not dispose off leftover food or paper in the dustbin,” rues Ravinder Reddy. Thanks to an adjacent dumping yard, the air that staff, animals and visitors here inhale is quite polluted.

Next time you want to watch a graceful doe in a playful mood or just relax in a green space, you know where to go.

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