

GREGARIOUS BAMBOO FLOWERING IN WAYANAD POSES THREAT

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Bamboo groves in bloom in the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary.

The “gregarious flowering of bamboo” inside the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WWS) and the nearby Mudumalai Tiger Reserve and Gudalur forest division in Tamil Nadu this year may pose a threat to wildlife in the Nilgiri biosphere, a major tiger and elephant habitat.

The bamboo groves in the Wayanad forest are the mainstay of herbivores in the Nilgiri biosphere during summer. With the advent of the season, migration of wild animals starts from the adjacent sanctuaries in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu to Wayanad due to shortage of fodder and water.

May affect migration

“The gregarious flowering may adversely affect migration, especially by elephants, wild gaur, and other lower herbivores owing to the mass destruction of bamboo groves after the flowering,” S. Narendra Babu, wildlife warden, WWS, said.

“Bamboo groves, which grow in more than 500 hectares of the 344.44 sq km of the sanctuary, have fully bloomed, a phenomenon said to occur once in the life cycle of bamboo plants” he added.

Moreover, pointing to a threat to wildlife as well as the ecology of the Nilgiri biosphere, it is reported that over 25% of bamboo groves in the WWS and nearby sanctuaries have bloomed since 2010, and the phenomenon is continuing.

Thorny bamboo (*Bamboosa bambos*) is a monocarpic (flowering only once) plant belonging to the Poaceae family (grass family), and its flowering cycle varies from 40 to 60 years.

Profuse natural regeneration occurs from seeds after gregarious flowering. Seeds have no dormancy, and it helps germination under favourable conditions soon after seed fall, Mr. Babu said.

Protection from fire

But protection from fire and grazing is essential for proper establishment of seedlings, he observed.

Fire incidents have been comparatively low in the sanctuary for the past five years owing to summer rain and conservation measures implemented by the Forest Department.

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