

SYNCHRONISED JUMBO POPULATION CENSUS STARTS IN 4 SOUTHERN STATES

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Forest Department staff involved in identifying footmarks of elephants during the survey in T.N. Palayam Forest Range of Sathyamangalam Division in Erode on Wednesday.

The three-day synchronised elephant population estimation exercise began on Wednesday, with direct counting of the pachyderms in 699 blocks, covering five tiger reserves and forest divisions with elephant population in Tamil Nadu.

A total of 1,731 staff of the Forest Department and 368 volunteers are involved in the exercise, which is also being carried out simultaneously in Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden Srinivas R. Reddy said the block census (direct counting) held on Wednesday will be followed by line transect survey (indirect counting) on Thursday.

Elephants coming to waterbodies will be estimated in the waterhole counting to be held on Friday.

Mr. Reddy said the census data from places across Tamil Nadu will be sent to Mudumalai Tiger Reserve for processing. Data from the adjoining forest areas of two States will be harmonised to avoid duplication based on the location and time of sighting.

According to him, the last synchronised elephant population estimation was done in 2017, when 2,761 elephants were recorded in Tamil Nadu. Though the synchronised survey is held every four years, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a delay in resuming the exercise.

"The initial coordination among the States is that we are doing the exercise on the same days. Second coordination is the pooling and sharing of the census data," he said.

Mr. Reddy said the data generated during the synchronised elephant population census will be validated by the results of a camera trap-based census, expected to be held in main elephant areas in June. The exercise, which follows a method developed by the Wildlife Institute of India, is going to be held for the first time, Mr. Reddy said.

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