

COIMBATORE

T.N. Forest Department formulates strategy to remove invasive tree species from MTR buffer zone

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UDHAGAMANDALAM OCTOBER 31, 2022 16:38 IST

UPDATED: OCTOBER 31, 2022 16:38 IST

Senna spectabilis, an ornamental species with bright yellow flowers, crowds out native species and limits food availability for wildlife, experts have said; the Forest Dept is attempting to remove these trees



The Forest Department is coming up with a comprehensive strategy to deal with the spread of the invasive, exotic tree, *Senna spectabilis*, which continues to spread rapidly in the buffer zone of the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR).

Introduced as an ornamental species and for use as firewood from South and Central America, the species has become highly invasive in the Sigur plateau in both the core and buffer zones of the MTR. Over the last few years, its bright yellow flowers have become more visible across the tiger reserve, with conservationists stating that the invasive weed has a negative effect on local biodiversity, crowding out native species and limiting food availability for wildlife.

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According to P. Arunkumar, Deputy Director of MTR (Buffer Zone), the Forest Department estimates that the species has spread over 800-1,200

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that the species seemed to be spreading faster over the last five years, during which time the trees seem to have become more common. The Forest Department is still demarcating areas where the species is spreading, but stated that they were looking at ensuring that the removal of the trees begins soon before the problem becomes more difficult to

manage.

According to officials, they are awaiting the decision of the Tamil Nadu Newsprint and Papers Limited (TNPL) to use wood from the *Senna spectabilis* trees from MTR for paper-making. Officials added that the funds raised from the removal of the species will be used in eco-restoration to help bring back native species.

Mr. Arunkumar, said that the Department was also formulating a 10-year-plan to systematically remove *Lantana camara*, the other major weed that poses a threat to biodiversity in both the core and buffer zones of the tiger reserve.

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