

Thal Kedar to be first bio heritage site of U'khand

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Dehradun: Thal Kedar forest in Pithoragarh, one of the five selected sites in Uttarakhand, is poised to become the state's first Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS). Influenced by the eastern Himalayas, the landscape is famous for its temperate forest spread between 4,000 and 8,000 ft in the Kumaon Himalayas, as per forest authorities evaluating the landscape. The BHS tag is conferred on unique, ecologically rich and fragile landscapes under the Biodiversity Act.

The Thal Kedar forest is a sanctuary for over 350 rare and threatened plant and animal species, including valuable medicinal plants.

Encompassing nearly 70% of broad-leaved trees, this forest plays a pivotal role in providing essential ecosystem services to neighbouring villages. It also contributes significantly to water conservation efforts in the region. Importantly, the forest holds deep socio-cultural significance among the local population, who consider it sacred. "A draft notification has been forwarded to the state government for review.

The next step will involve seeking public opinions and addressing objections before the final notification is issued," said Dhananjai Mohan, chairman of the Uttarakhand Biodiversity Board. "The Biodiversity Management Committee (BMC) of Thal Kedar themselves has sought this status, knowing its ecological importance.

This landscape is on the easternmost side of Uttarakhand, and therefore it has eastern Himalayan influence and harbours a robust biodiversity," Mohan added. Over the past few years, the Uttarakhand Biodiversity Board has

conducted field visits and engaged in consultations with local communities to pursue the prestigious BHS status. Villagers in areas like Manigoan, Ghotla, Gwilani, and Angan told TOI about the special significance of the Thal Kedar forest to them.

Two more sites in Uttarkashi and one each in Pithoragarh and Tehri have been earmarked for the BHS tag. This recognition not only safeguards these landscapes from concretization but also enhances their appeal to domestic and international tourists, officials said.

The revenue generated will be channelled back to the respective Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) to support the conservation and maintenance of these vital landscapes.

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Forest sentinels evicted squatters and documented biodiversity Fifty forest officials in Karnataka were honored for their achievements, such as cracking down on encroachers and documenting endangered fauna. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah urged them to motivate others and increase the state's forest cover from 22% to 33% to combat the effects of climate change and drought. Forest Minister Eshwar B Khandre emphasized the need to reclaim encroached land and increase coordination between departments. In related news, a team is monitoring the fringes of Nagarhole Tiger Reserve after tigers were spotted, and the National Green Tribunal has ordered an investigation into alleged forest land encroachment in Nainital. [104056281](#)

Ukhand biodiversity board holds meet on Himalayas conservation The Uttarakhand Biodiversity Board held a conference on Himalayan conservation in Dehradun, attended by locals from 29 Biodiversity Management Committees. The event aimed to assess progress made by communities in Uttarkashi and Pithoragarh districts under the SECURE Himalaya project. The communities were trained in sustainable livelihood-generating activities and shared their learnings. Forest minister Subodh Uniyal and senior forest department authorities were present, addressing ongoing schemes and listening to villagers' grievances. Additionally, efforts are being made to control the population of feral dogs in Uttarkashi district to protect snow leopards, and seven plant species in India are causing irreversible damage to the country's biodiversity. [103948299](#)

Construction debris threatens biodiversity in Salim Ali bird sanctuary The Salim Ali bird sanctuary in Pune is facing numerous challenges, including construction debris, encroachment, and garbage dumping. The polluted Mula-

Mutha river and a recent riverfront development project are also threatening the biodiversity park. Construction trucks carrying debris have been entering the sanctuary for the past decade, and encroachments by stalls are suffocating the land. The introduction of a metro line has further reduced protection for biodiversity. The sanctuary's ecosystem, which was a hotspot for native and migratory birds, has been buried in debris, leading to a decline in species. The degradation of the sanctuary not only affects biodiversity but also contributes to climate change and disrupts the city's ecosystem.104097544



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