

# Forest dept begins eco-restoration project

TNN | Aug 6, 2020, 04.41 AM IST

Idukki: The forest department has begun a grassland restoration project at Anamudi Shola National Park (ANP) in Munnar. The project aims to convert 50 hectares containing exotic species such as Eucalyptus and Pine trees to grasslands within one year. Pampampadum Shola range officer M K Shameer said, “Two years before, over 50 acres of forest land in the ANP was gutted in a fire. The department then, on a trial basis, started an eco-restoration project at Pazhathotam area. Exotic species were cleared from the forest land and grass was planted. The success of the project inspired us to expand it to more areas.”

To ensure the participation of local residents, the department has formed an eco-development committee (EDC) for the project, including 100 families in the region, said officials. The department will pay wages to the families supporting the project, Shameer said.

The total length of Anamudi Shola National park is 32 square kilometre. Of the 32 sq km forest, 14 sq km is filled with exotic species. The increasing area of exotic species inside the forest is affecting the food and water availability of wild animals, the officials said.

“We plan to phase out the exotic species in the forest land with grasslands over the years. The project is implemented with the support of the United Nations Development Project (UNDP), Green India Mission and other departments,” said the range officer.

“We hope the grassland restoration project will assure food security to the wild animals in the region. The camera traps found that wild animals are regular visitors to the restored grass lands,” said the official.