

India's first project to conserve Nilgiri Tahr takes shape

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India's first Nilgiri Tahr project to conserve the State animal of Tamil Nadu will be taken up at a cost of ₹25.14 crore. The State government, on Wednesday, issued an order sanctioning the project.

In the 2022-2023 Tamil Nadu Budget, the Finance Minister had announced in the Assembly that "for the conservation of Tamil Nadu's State animal, expansion of its habitat and to spread awareness among the public, the government will implement project The Nilgiri Tahr with an initial allocation of ₹10 crore".

Based on the Budget announcement, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden sent a proposal to implement the project over a period of five years — 2022 to 2027. This was sanctioned by the State government on Wednesday.

The project will have nine components, including bi-annual synchronised surveys across the division, diagnosis and treatment for affected individuals and Shola grassland restoration pilot in Upper Bhavani, the order said.

The Nilgiri Tahr is the only mountain ungulate in Southern India among the 12 species present in India. It's population has been estimated at 3,122 in the wild, according to a report released by WWF India in 2015. The animal used to be found along the entire stretch of Western Ghats but in small fragmented pockets. A large part of its population has been wiped out from its historical range. The existing populations are under severe stress due to habitat loss and hunting, says information in WWF-India website.

Chief Minister MK Stalin tweeted: "Extremely happy and proud to inform you that the State animal of Tamil Nadu Nilgiri Tahr gets an exclusive project dedicated for its conservation. Government has issued orders today to set up India's first The Nilgiri Tahr project. We will ensure that the state animal of Tamil Nadu is well protected and all efforts are taken for its conservation."

State's Environment Climate Change & Forests Secretary tweeted: "A historic day today for us at Tamil Nadu Forest as India's first 'Project Nilgiri Tahr' takes shape. Government orders issued for conservation of the most beautiful & enigmatic Nilgiri Tahr, the State animal of TN at a cost of ₹25.14 crore.

Project Nilgiri Tahr of Tamil Nadu Forest aims to restore the fragmented habitat especially Shola grasslands where it thrives, reintroduce the Tahr population in its historic habitat and ensure proper rehabilitation facilities are provided, she said.

Source: <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/indias-first-project-to-conserve-nilgiri-tahr-takes-shape/article66313644.ece>