

# Nature's vault powers Hyderabad's lungs

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The Kasu Brahmananda Reddy (KBR) national park, known for its lush green walkways, friendly peafowls and vibrant ecosystem provides the much-needed detox to visitors. But little do people know the park and its many elements are holding the fragile ecological balance of surrounding areas by a thread.

## A WALK IN THE PARK

Five birds to spot during monsoon



● **Small minivet** | black tail with yellow edges - known for catching insects mid-air

● **Red muniya** | breeding season- the male bird has a

## TREES TO NOTE IN KBR PARK

- Pavetta indica in park periphery with white flowers
- Babool trees are also scattered in abundance inside the core
- Rella in park periphery which has its golden shower time in May - June
- Albegia tree, acacia trees and tamarind trees





distinct blood red plumage during mating season

- **Yellow wattled lapwing** | has a unique bird call with a loud "cheee" sound
- **Indian silverbill** | Grey-coloured small bird with pointed black tail
- **Tricoloured muniya** | breeding season



Pics: Arranged by Harikrishna A, a birder

### Five birds to spot in winters



- Blue-tailed bee-eater
- Taiga flycatcher
- Bay-backed shrike
- Red-breasted flycatcher
- Black-naped monarch





Wild fruit trees planted on sheet rocks

### SIX KINDS OF HABITATS EXIST IN ONE PLACE

- **Grasslands** | predominantly found on the side of park near to Road No. 92. Crucial to support birds that lay eggs on ground
- **Scrub jungle** | Consists of large yet thin woody trees providing the canopy cover to the park, seen mostly towards the Jubilee Hills check post side of the park
- **Water bodies** | One major lake- Chiran lake- along with nine other smaller ponds. Inaccessible being inside the forest core, these are crucial for roosting activity and socializing of birds, and prey for snakes.
- **Man-made environment** | Includes internal walkways which are 4km in length, an open gym, education centre, office etc.
- **Periphery** | Periphery or the eco-sensitive zone of the park is outside the park and has a walkway which has a mix of native and non-native trees. It varies from 3-27 meters width.
- **Rocky hillocks** | Form a very small part of the park and are scattered across

Repository of Deccan flora and fauna

The 142.5 hectares of park has two elements - 86.5 hectares as conservation zone and 56.5 hectares as visitor zone. Experts note that the conservation zone, which is off limits for public, is a repository of Deccan flora and fauna. "KBR has a total of six

kinds of habitats which include small grasslands, woody trees, water bodies, built-up space, perimeter and rocky hillock. Each of these play a role larger than just sustaining the life inside,” explained Arun Vasireddy, an environmentalist.

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To elaborate, Aasheesh Pittie, a birder and observer of the park explains the role of habitats. “The entire park is like a ditch soaked in water. Such an open space with a lake (Chiraan lake) at a high level and acts as a basin soaking rainwater and ensuring it percolates to nearby lakes and recharges the aquifers,” he said.

The 20 hectares of grasslands in the area, which is the only such available space in the city, acts as the breeding spot not only for the national bird, peacock, but also for 170 other species of birds, 20 mammal species including hare, porcupine, pangolin, 20 reptiles.



Amphibian species like cobra, monitor lizards and 24 species of butterflies too exist and intermingle. The woody deciduous trees, which go dry and leafless in summers, host thousands of birds, many even migrating from other countries.

“Some birds like cuckoos, minivets, sunbirds, parakeets, booted eagles and spotted owlets can be seen round the year. Many migratory birds like flycatchers too make it home every winter and leave by March-April. We also have migrant birds like tricolour munia and red munia who breed and leave in June- July,” explained Harikrishna A, president of Hyderabad Birding Pals.

These birds not only make the forest their home but give back to keep forests alive with their bird droppings and pollination.

In fact, the core species of peafowls ensures that the national park gets the sanctity that it currently enjoys, despite being amid a bustling city. “As per our latest survey, there are 538 peafowls in the park, which is more than the carrying capacity of 300. Due to the conducive and undisturbed environment, we expect the population to increase further, making it a one-of-a-kind space,” said M Joji, district forest officer, Hyderabad district.

Retain the philosophy of national park

While the conservation zone remains untouched, experts and observers push for the need to keep the visitors’ area as close to its natural form. “In recent years, some landscaping and replanting efforts within the visitors’ area have only served the purpose of aesthetics. Smoothing of walkers’ park, laying of lawn, etc go against the philosophy of leaving national parks untouched, even in the visitors’ area,” said Aasheesh.

“Any external impact like building of flyovers or tunnels can affect any species and the domino effect of degradation will kick in,” added Kajal Maheshwari, core campaigner in the Save KBR movement.