

Tamil Nadu may get its sixth tiger reserve in Erode

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UDHAGAMANDALAM: Nearly a year after the central government approved the Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve as India's 51st tiger reserve and Tamil Nadu's fifth, the forest department has initiated a process of drafting a proposal to create the sixth tiger reserve in the Erode forest division in the state.

TIGER RESERVES IN TN

| Name of tiger reserves | Area (sqkm) | No.of tigers (2018 census) |
|--|-------------|----------------------------|
| Mudumalai Tiger Reserve | 688 | 103 |
| Anaimalai Tiger Reserve | 1,479 | 20 |
| Kalakadu Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve | 1,601 | 8 |
| Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve | 1,408 | 83 |
| Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve | 1,016 | 14-15* |

*(according to a recent census)

Spread over an area of about 82,144 hectares, the Erode forest division is home to 15-20 tigers, according to principal chief conservator of forests and chief wildlife warden Shekar Kumar Niraj.

Niraj said, "The initiation is in a bid to provide more scientific and geographical protection to the Erode forest division, which is home to 15-20 tigers besides elephants, leopards, wild dogs, wild boars, Indian gaurs, deer and other rare species. The division is rich in wildlife."

While the Kollegal forest division of Karnataka is located on the northern side of the Erode forest division, Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR) is on the western side.

Erode district comprises three forest divisions, including Sathyamangalam and Hasanur divisions that fall under the STR.

"The Erode division of forest is well connected with the western and eastern ghats, which would ensure good genetic quality of wild species," Niraj said.

According to Niraj, the process involves field work, survey and data collection as per the guidelines of the government of India.

"Also, local communities would get opportunities to get involved in the protection mechanism and earn a livelihood," Niraj said. There are six tribal settlements in the Erode forest division.

District forest officer of Erode division S Gowtham said, "In the process of drafting a proposal for a tiger reserve, we are looking into the history of wildlife in the division."

"The Erode forest division is already surrounded by two protected areas such as Kollegal forest division and STR. The presence of tigers was noticed in at least 50% of the forest area of the division," he added.

"The forest division should be promoted as a tiger reserve as it needs more protection," Gowtham said.

After seven years of gap, the Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve with an area of 1,016 sqkm was formed in February 2021.

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/erode/tamil-nadu-may-get-its-sixth-tiger-reserve-in-erode/articleshow/89127635.cms>