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Hyderabad's growing green space: city now hosts country's largest Miyawaki forest

Spread over 18 acres in Kavaguda near the airport, the forest has 126 species of native fruit and flowering trees and is a birds' paradise

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spread over 10 acres, this is the country's largest Miyawaki forest, followed by one in Gujarat, spread over 14 acres.

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Sriram, who has documented 1,013 (out of the 1,350) bird species in India, says “In three days, I spotted over 50 species of birds. Apart from the resident birds like the Tickell’s blue flycatcher, barn owl, red-collared dove and barred buttonquail, I spotted winter visitors like the rosy starling and lesser whitethroat. Mind you, this is just the beginning of the bird-watching season. We can expect to spot many more.”

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The Miyawaki method — pioneered by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki — helps build dense, fast-growing forests with native plants. Starting in 2019, the forest in Kavaguda already has over 4 lakh trees that attract birds, butterflies and dragonfly species. Assisted by TRST01 consultancy, , the Stone Craft team has GI-tagged each tree in the forest.

Keerthi explains, “At the beginning of COVID-19 when we acquired the land (of 62 acres), we had no idea of how we would develop it. Later, when the world faced a scarcity of oxygen cylinders during the pandemic, we realigned our plans.” That led to the conceptualisation of building a forest that would be self-sustaining and also ensure continuous oxygen supply to nearby areas. After much study and brainstorming, , the duo zeroed in on the Miyawaki method.

Thereafter, Stone Craft created a team comprising forest officials and architects to identify native trees and prepare the soil in the right way. “We studied native tree species in a 50-

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To this soil, we added natural manure sourced from a dairy farm. Following good rains, the method saw a forest growing rapidly,” she adds.

Now the forest has 126 species of native fruit and flowering trees like custard apple, Indian hog plum, gulmohar, java olive, asoka, java plum, Indian soapberry, tamarind, neem and peepal. They have also translocated 40 banyan trees that would have otherwise been axed.

Kirthi adds, “To observe how different species respond to each other, we created a nursery where we studied the trees and their growth before going ahead to create the forest. We just kept planting and before we knew it, we ended up covering 18 acres.”

View of the woods

Resident birds at Woods: Purple-rumped sunbird | Photo Credit: Sriram Reddy

Resident birds at Woods: Barn owl | Photo Credit: Sriram Reddy

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