

Water woes hit wildlife in Coimbatore Forest Division as ponds, streams dry up

Coimbatore, Madukkarai and Periyanaickenpalayam are the worst affected forest ranges, and animals are fully dependent on water troughs maintained by the Forest Department

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The storage area of Bhavanisagar Reservoir in the Sirumugai forest range of Coimbatore division is the main source of water for animals during summer. | Photo Credit: PERIASAMY M

With the temperature soaring, majority of the natural water sources in the Coimbatore Forest Division have dried up, forcing wild animals to largely depend on troughs maintained by the Forest Department. Officials said that very few water bodies in the division have water, that too, at minimal levels. The summer impact has also forced large herbivores like elephants to stray more into villages for water and fodder.

Flow in River Bhavani is very minimal and the water level at Bhavanisagar Reservoir stood at 45.49 feet against the full reservoir level (FRL) of 105 feet on Tuesday. The storage area of the reservoir, which falls under Sirumugai forest range of Coimbatore division, used to be the main source of water for animals during summer. With the water level touching the lowest in recent years, animals are forced to cross large tracts of mud to access the water.

There are 14 troughs in Sirumugai range, out of which eight are solar-powered. “All the troughs are kept full to ensure that animals do not struggle to find water”, said Sirumugai Forest Range Officer K. Manoj.

River Bhavani is also a water source for animals in the Mettupalayam forest range.

In the Karamadai range, animals depend on Pilloor reservoir. The reservoir’s water level stood at 55 ft against the FRL of 100 ft on Tuesday. Other natural streams in the range were almost dry.

Coimbatore, Madukkarai and Periyanaickenpalayam are the worst affected forest ranges and animals are fully dependent on water filled in the troughs.

“There are 21 troughs in the Periyanaickenpalayam range. All of them are refilled regularly. Some farmers offer water for the purpose,” said Periyanaickenpalayam Forest Range Officer M. Saravanan.

In the Madukkarai range, all the natural streams, including the one called Vettumaduvu, have dried up. A stream, namely Amman Padugai, which flows along the Tamil Nadu – Kerala border, has also dried up.

Afforestation work hit

“Vettumaduvu used to have water in summer in the past. The water scarcity has also affected the afforestation work as saplings planted earlier this year need to be watered to withstand the summer,” said Madukkarai Forest Range Officer R. Arun Kumar.

Boluvampatti forest range, through which River Noyyal flows, has a few streams that still have water. Kovai Courtallam waterfall still has water and visitors are permitted. The upper reaches of Siruvani is another source of water for animals.

District Forest Officer N. Jayaraj said the Department has shouldered the task of maintaining the troughs with water on a daily basis for the wild animals.

Salt licks

“A total of 101 troughs are there in the division and all of them are cleaned twice a week and refilled regularly. Salt and mineral licks have been placed at 90 locations to supplement the mineral needs of animals, birds and insects like butterflies,” he said.