

The shola-grassland ecosystem is a strange admixture of temperate and tropical qualities due to the combined effects of altitude as well as latitude. It is exceptionally rich in orchids and balsams. The spectacular mass flowering of the shrub Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthus kunthiana*) takes place in the grasslands in cycles of 12 years. The last Neelakurinji 'outburst' was in the year 2006 and next is expected in 2018.

FACILITIES

Day visits to Rajamala in the tourism zone are possible and normally the tahr can be sighted at close quarters. The "Story of the Park" provide valuable insights about the ecosystem. An amenities centre run by the members of eco-development committees function for providing basic facilities. It is also possible to have a short walk from the Interpretation Centre along the road through the grasslands.

An eco-shop sells different products, the benefit goes for the conservation of the National Park.

Entry of private vehicles inside the National Park is prohibited and the visitors have to avail the Mini Bus service operated by the AFDA & consortium of the EDCs. All profits of the AFDA are ploughed back for the conservation efforts of the ENP.

The Park remains closed for about two months during the calving season which occurs between January and March.



For enquiries & reservation:

1. FOREST INFORMATION CENTRE
Wildlife Warden's Office
Munnar P.O. – 685 612
Tel/Fax: 04865 231587
E-mail: enpmunnar@sify.com
2. ASSISTANT WILDLIFE WARDEN
E.N.P Rajamala, Munnar P. O.



Web site: www.eravikulam.org



LOCATION AND APPROACH



Eravikulam National Park is situated along the crest of the Western Ghats in the High Ranges (Kanan Devan Hills) of Idukki District of Kerala State. The 97 Sq. Km Park is comprised of the shola – grassland ecosystem at an average elevation of 2000 metres. It is bordered on the north by Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary of Tamil Nadu and on the south, by tea estates.

The closest town is Munnar, a centre of tea industry, 13 Km to the south of the Park. Rajamala, the tourism zone of the Park is approachable by vehicles upto Vth mile. The stark beauty of the high mountains, the rolling grasslands and the possibility of sighting the highly endangered Nilgiri tahr draw a large number of visitors to Rajamala.

HISTORY

During the colonial days, the High Range Game Preservation Association managed the area as a Game Preserve for the erstwhile Kanan Devan Hills Produce Company. The Muthuvan tribals, known for their tracking skills, were employed as game watchers. They are the original inhabitants of these hills. The



area was taken over in 1971 by the Kerala Government and declared as a Sanctuary in 1975. It was upgraded to a National Park in 1978 in recognition of its unique ecological values. The Planter community and the Muthuvans continue their association with the protection and management of the Park.

LANDSCAPE AND CLIMATE

The main body of the National Park is a high rolling plateau with a base elevation of about 2000 meters. Most of the knolls and peaks rise 100-300 metres above it with some mountains reaching altitudes of over 2500 mts. The highest peak is Anaimudi (2695 mts). The vast grasslands interspersed with sholas (patches of stunted evergreen forests) are the last remnants of the unique ecosystem that was once prevalent in the upper reaches of the Western Ghats. The Park is crisscrossed by perennial streams that originate in the sholas.

The climate is described as tropical montane. The Park experiences very heavy rainfall. It receives its major precipitation



during the south-west monsoons (June-August). The average annual rainfall is about 3000 mm. In winter, the temperature goes even below freezing point.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Eravikulam National Park harbours the largest surviving population of Nilgiri Tahr (*Hemitragus hylocrius*). This endangered animal is endemic to the southern Western Ghats. Its nearest relative is the Himalayan Tahr. The fully grown male, known as 'saddle back', is much bigger and darker than the female and has a silvery saddle like patch on its back. Mating takes place during monsoons and the birth season is January-February. The estimated population of tahr inside the park is about 700. Wild dog, leopard and tiger are the main predators. Apart from tahr, other little known animals such as *Nilgiri Marten*, *Small Clawed Otter*, *Ruddy Mongoose*, and *Dusky Striped Squirrel* are also found. Elephants make seasonal visits. About 120 species of birds have been recorded which include endemics like *Black and Orange Flycatcher*, *Nilgiri Pipit*, *Nilgiri Wood Pigeon*, *White Bellied Shortwing*, *Nilgiri Verditer Flycatcher* and *Kerala Laughing Thrush*. Endemics confined to the shola-grassland ecosystem like the *Red Disc Bushbrown* and *Palni Fourwing* are among the 100 odd butterflies listed inside the Park.

