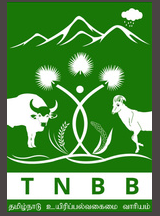




TAMIL NADU BIODIVERSITY BOARD



NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2021

ISSUE 1 VOLUME 1

CONTENT HIGHLIGHTS

- IDB celebration
- World Oceans Day
- India Biodiversity Awards
- SBSAP
- Snippets of news



Thiru K Ramachandran
Honourable Minister for Forests and Chairperson, TNBB



Tmt Supriya Sahu IAS
Principal Secretary to Government, Environment, Climate Change and Forest Department

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Honourable Minister for Forests Thiru K Ramachandran took charge of his portfolio on 7th May 2021. Thus, the Hon'ble Minister for Forests Thiru K Ramachandran also became the new Chairperson of the Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board.

Tmt Supriya Sahu IAS has taken over as the Principal Secretary to Government, Environment Climate Change and Forests Department, Government of Tamil Nadu on 3rd June and became the new member of Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board.

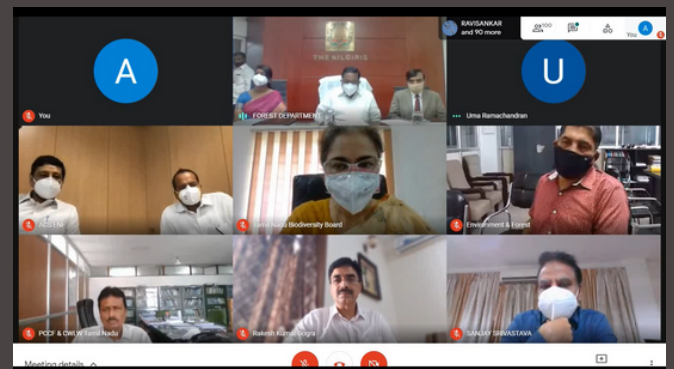
International Day for Biological Diversity Celebration



Online webinar in connection with IDB Speech by Hon'ble Minister for Forests

The International Day for Biological Diversity is celebrated on May 22 every year worldwide to increase the understanding and awareness regarding biodiversity issues. This year the theme was "We're part of the solution #ForNature". Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board conducted a Webinar on 'Biodiversity Conservation – We are part of the solution – For nature' on 21.05.2021 in connection with the International Day for Biological Diversity 2021.

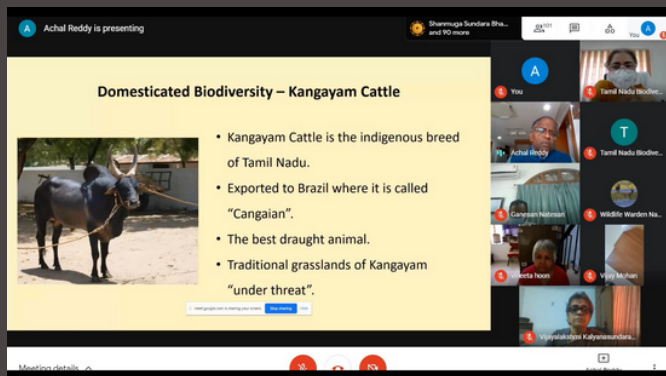
The meeting was presided over by Thiru K.Ramachandran, Honourable Minister for Forests and Chairperson, TNBB. Special Address was given by the Additional Chief Secretary to Government, Environment and Forests Department, Thiru Sandeep Saxena IAS and Additional Chief Secretary to Government, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department, Thiru Hans Raj Verma IAS, focusing on the importance of biodiversity and its linkage with livelihood.



Webinar participants

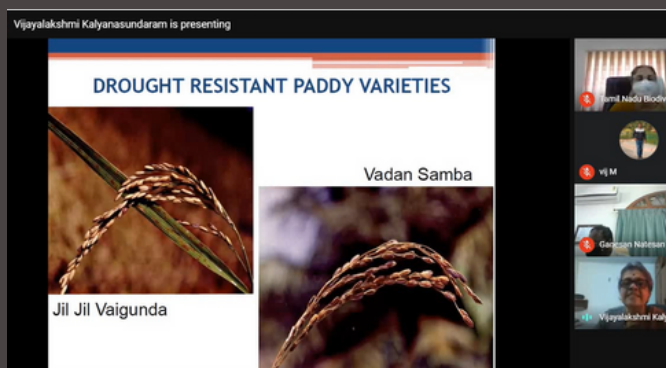
Six delegates addressed the participants in the technical session. Shri. C.Achalender Reddy, IFS (R) - Ex-PCCF, Arunachal Pradesh, Member, National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), and presently Director, Centre for Innovations in Public Systems, Hyderabad spoke on the topic "Biodiversity & Biological Diversity Act - Challenges in Understanding & Implementation" wherein he emphasized the challenges in implementing Biodiversity Act.

The future trends that were flagged by him were increase in human population which will have a huge effect on biodiversity, illegal removal of timber, soil, medicinal plants and even non-biological resources which greatly affects the habitat, climate change, pollution, water scarcity, soil health etc and the powers given to communities represented by Biodiversity Management Committees through the Biodiversity Act and the relevant rules. He also spoke on the importance of conserving native livestock breeds.

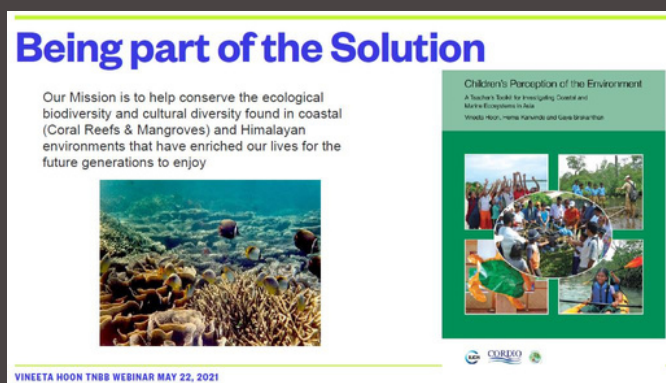


Talk by Shri Achalender Reddy IFS

Dr. K.Vijayalakshmi, Director, Sempulam Sustainable Solutions Private Limited spoke about the importance of Agro-biodiversity for its financial and ecological benefits. Dr. Divya Mudappa, Senior Scientist, Nature Conservation Foundation, Mysore, India spoke on “Caring for a landscape: wildlife conservation in a rainforest plantation mosaic in the Western Ghats”.

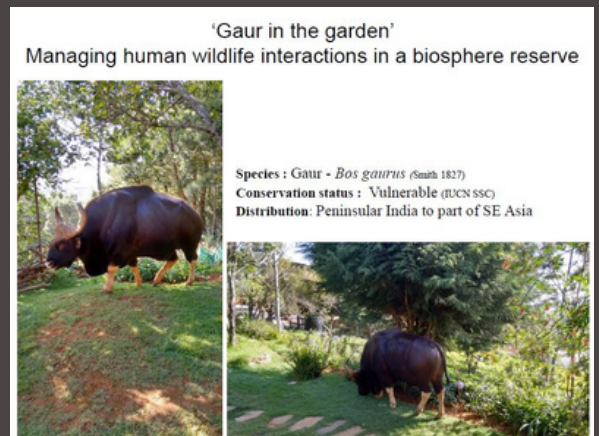


Talk by Dr. K.Vijayalakshmi



Dr. S.Muralidharan, Senior Principal Scientist & Head, Division of Ecotoxicology & Director In-charge, SACON spoke about “Impact of indiscriminate pesticide use in birds: An Indian Scenario”. Dr. Anita Varghese, Director, Keystone Foundation highlighted issues pertaining to Gaur. Dr. Vineeta Hoon, Founder & Director, Centre for Action Research on Environment Science & Society, Chennai spoke about “Encounters with Biodiversity around the globe” including the Antarctic.

The board also conducted an online competition for general public for singing folk song on Biodiversity so as to increase the awareness about biodiversity among the people.



India Biodiversity Awards



On the eve of International Day for Biological Diversity on 22 May 2021, during a programme by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and National Biodiversity Authority(NBA), Mr S.Sathish, Forest Range Officer, Ramanathapuram wildlife range, was awarded the India Biodiversity Award 2021 in Sustainable Use of Biological Resources (individual) category for his exemplary work in reviving and activating the Eco Development Committee of Kaarankaadu village in Ramanathapuram District and

initiating eco-tourism in that area thereby sustainably utilizing the biological resource for the betterment of local community and also paving way for nature conservation. NBA hosts the India Biodiversity Awards every two years to recognize individuals and institutions who are pioneers in conservation of biodiversity in 8 different categories. Both entries from our state made it to the final round of which one was declared winner and the other Sedapatti block BMC in Madurai district received a letter of appreciation under best BMC category.



India Biodiversity Award committee visit to Sedapatti BMC

World Oceans Day

JUNE 8, 2021

On the eve of The World Oceans Day, a webinar was organised by Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board to emphasise on the importance of and create awareness about marine resources which is not as well understood as terrestrial resources. The Commissioner of Fisheries, Thiru J. Jayakanthan, I.A.S was a special invitee who spoke about Policy and programmes of Fisheries Department for marine based livelihoods. Dr. K. Sivakumar, Scientist-F, Wildlife Institute of India gave an overview about the Coastal & marine biodiversity of Tamil Nadu.



Dugong, an endangered species found off the coast of Tamil Nadu

Dr. J.K. Patterson Edward, Director, Suganthi Devadason Marine Research Institute spoke on various issues related to Conservation of the Marine Wealth of Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay, which is an Imperative for Sustainable Livelihood. He highlighted the problems such as reduction in seagrasses, coral bleaching, farming of invasive seaweed species *Kappaphycus alvarezii*, etc. Dr. K. Mohammed Koya, Scientist, Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute spoke about the Indigenous seaweed farming - a climate smart enterprise for inhabitants of vulnerable coral atoll reef in Lakshadweep. He highlighted how they achieved 56 fold growth on an average in 45 days of cultivation of the native seaweed species *Gracilaria edulis* and *Acanthophora spicifer*. Such studies on lucrative cultivation of native species in Tamil Nadu is the need of the hour to replace invasives and save the local eco-systems.



Coral bleaching



Seaweed cultivation

11.04.2013



Shri Yogesh Warkad IFS, Regional Dy. Director and Shri Rakesh Burman from Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, Mumbai spoke about the illegal trade in marine species with special reference to Export Import policy. Dr. D. Narasimhan Board Member, Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board briefed about the ABS obtained from the cultivation of seaweeds in the coast of Tamil Nadu and the expert committee's work to identify the right benefit claimers and in fixing the rules for utilising the benefits obtained. Dr. N.Krishna Kumar made a concluding remark by emphasizing the importance of marine biodiversity and how these sessions by various speakers would be helpful in taking further steps in the conservation of marine resources. He also highlighted some of the issues that have stayed for long and needed to be resolved without loss of time.



State Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

The first brainstorming session for initiating the preparation of an updated State Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (SBSAP) was conducted on 15.04.2021. The meeting was conducted by Ms. Mita Banerjee IFS, APCCF and Secretary, TNBB and joined by members of TNBB Dr. Jayshree Vencatesan and Dr. Narsimhan as well as others such as Dr. Nambi.

The main participants were the nodal officers of each district and other officials. The prime objective of this programme was to obtain inputs on issues pertaining to implementation of the provisions of the Biodiversity Act and related rules, aspects to be focused upon by the Board for the purpose of conservation, sustainable use and benefit sharing possible strategies and useful ideas for action plan based on the experience of various nodal officers (District Forest Officers) and board members to assist in the preparation of SBSAP for Tamil Nadu.

The context of brainstorming was set by Ms. Mita Banerjee IFS, Member Secretary, TNBB by giving background information on the principal objectives of CBD, SDGs, BDA, NBSAP, NDCs pertaining to climate change, economic wisdom in conservation, etc. thus throwing light on what was expected out of the discussions. Subsequently, several valuable inputs were shared by each of the participants indicating the key areas to be focused upon, challenges in implementation and measures to be adopted. Based on the feedback received during the meeting, follow up action is being taken like requesting information pertaining to key areas of focus and measures / strategies from line departments, scientific organisations and educational & research institutions so as to further analyse and plan ahead and proceed with the preparation of SBSAP.

Access Benefit Sharing

In line with the Guidelines on Access to Biological Resources and Associated Knowledge and Benefits Sharing Regulations, 2014 the Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board hosted an ABS sub-committee meeting on 17.02.2021 in which 14 applications, both received at SBB and from NBA were taken up for approval and further processing. The Board has been receiving and processing applications from industries/ institutions / individuals who are desirous of accessing and utilising biological resources thereby regulating and ensuring its sustainable use. The board has identified a tentative list of industries that are extracting and utilising biological resources and has been issuing notices to them to comply with the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 as a result of which several responses and new applications were received. The Board has so far received amounts as part of benefit sharing from iSERA Biological Pvt Ltd, Pune for the utilisation of snake venom, from NBA for benefit claimers TNAU, Aquatic animal health laboratory, etc., for accessing *Bacillus thuringiensis* (from soil samples), for *Indigofera tinctoria*, *Strobilanthus kunthianus*, etc. and from Sea 6 energy Pvt Ltd and Pepsico Pvt Ltd for the cultivation of seaweeds in the coastal districts of

Ramanathapuram, Tuticorin, Thanjavur and Pudukottai districts. The benefit from accessing snake venom, a first of its kind in India had been distributed to the benefit claimers - Irula Snake Catchers Industrial Co-operative Society, Thiruporur in November 2020. The Board has made the submission of Form I applications online so as to make the process easier and more transparent..

News and activities

Interaction with senior officials from other States



Dr. D.N. Mohan, IFS, PCCF and Secretary, Andhra Pradesh Biodiversity Board and Dr. Shruti Sharma, IFS, PCCF, Rajasthan who shared their experience with reference to biodiversity conservation in their respective States

Work on BMCs having majority SC population

TNBB received funds for constitution & operationalisation of BMCs with more than 40% SC population and documentation of PBR in those BMCs. 16 block BMCs have been chosen in this regard and a fund of Rs 35000 has been released to each one of the 16 BMCs. Various teams from TNBB visited the BMCs in the districts of Cuddalore, Kancheepuram, The Nilgiris, Thiruvavur and Nagapattinam during the months of January, February and March for activating the BMCs and to sensitize & enlighten the members on the updation of PBR. Subsequently, it led to actual updation of PBRs in 33 village level PBRs in 7 blocks during the month of April.



Training for PBR updation by Dr Arivudai Nambi at Village Panchayat – Thiruvavur



Training for PBR updation by Dr Arivudai Nambi – Thiruvavur block



Training for PBR updation by Board member - Dr Narasimhan Pachambakkam village - Chengelpattu

Work on model blocks

Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board has selected 90 block BMCs in various districts so as to strengthen them and thereby spread awareness to other BMCs. In line with this, a team from TNBB visited Thiruvattar, Thovalai and Rajakkamangalam blocks of Kanyakumari district and conducted consultation meeting with various stakeholders like AD(Panchayat), Block Development Officers, Village Panchayat President and local people in order to facilitate the activation of BMCs in those blocks.



Consultation with BDOs Kanyakumari district



A team visited some of the village panchayats in Tiruvallur district with the objective of making the BMCs more active. The team interacted with various local people and visited a few sacred groves so as to reconnaissance and identify the potential and scope for biodiversity conservation activities in those localities.



News Snippets

- A new species of mammal has been discovered by the scientists of Zoological Survey of India in the Narcondam volcanic island of Andaman & Nicobar. It has been named as *Crocidura narcondamica* sp. nov. Now, the total number of catalogued *Crocidura* species in India has increased to 12.

Source : Kamalakannan, M. et al. Discovery of a new mammal species (Soricidae: Eulipotyphla) from Narcondam volcanic island, India. *Sci. Rep.* 11, 9416 (2021)

- *Veronica plebeia* R. Br. , a flowering plant belonging to Plantaginaceae family which is native to Australia has been found in The Nilgiris. At first look the discovery of a new species in the State seems attractive but since the species has tendency towards invasiveness, the species needs to be monitored.

Source : G., Rekha; SUJANA, K. A.. *Veronica plebeia* R. Br. (Plantaginaceae), A New Distributional Record for India. *Indian Forester*, [S.1.], p. 690-691, jul. 2021. ISSN 2321-094X. Available at: <<http://www.indianforester.in/index.php/indianforester/article/view/154342>>

- A team of volunteers headed by Yuvan Aves from an NGO based in Chennai – Madras Naturalists Society have successfully catalogued 300+ species of flora and fauna from Pulicat to Pondicherry and are in the further process of documenting them for the entire coastline of the state.

Source : <https://www.inaturalist.org/guides/13428>

- A new species of Asian gracile skink has been discovered in The Nilgiri district, Western Ghats. The species named as *Subdoluseps nilgiriensis* is currently vulnerable. This is the third skink species discovered in India. The discovery has been published on 17th May, 2021.

Source : S. R. GANESH , ACHYUTHAN N. SRIKANTHAN , AVRAJJAL GHOSH , OMKAR DILIP ADHIKARI , SHREE VARSHA VIJAY KUMAR , ANIRUDDHA DATTA-ROY. A new species of Asian gracile skink (Scincidae: Lygosominae: Subdoluseps) from the rain-shadow belts of Nilgiri hills, Western Ghats, India. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.4950.2.7>

- A new wingless insect which is just 1mm long has been discovered in The Nilgiris. It has been named as *Bionychiurus tamilensis*. There are only 6 species under this genus in the entire world. The insect was first observed in 2018 in Government Arts College, Ooty. The finding was published on 2nd February 2021.

Source : Abu Muhsina Thunnisa, Nallathambi Sumithra, Senthilkumar Narmatha et al. First record of genus *Bionychiurus* Pomorski 1996 (Collembola: Onychiuridae) from India., 02 February 2021, PREPRINT (Version 1) available at Research Square [<https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-156881/v1>]

- 3 new grasshopper species have been discovered in Karnataka, Arunachal Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. They have been named as *Macropsis dalhousiensis*, *Macropsis krishna* and *Macropsis puttardriahi*. The findings were published on 08-01-2021.

Source : Viraktamath CA, Yeshwanth HM. Three new leafhopper species of *Macropsis* Lewis (Hemiptera: Cicadellidae: Eurymelinae: Macropsini) with a key to species from the Indian subcontinent. *Zootaxa*. 2021 Jan 8;4903(3):zootaxa.4903.3.3. doi:10.11646/zootaxa.4903.3.3. PMID: 33757086.

- A rare freshwater fish named as *Schistura Hiranyakeshi* was discovered in Sawantwadi tehsil of Sindhudurg district near Amboli in Maharashtra. Subsequently, the Government of Maharashtra declared an area in the Western Ghats in Amboli as Biodiversity Heritage Site on 31st March 2021.

Source : Jayasimhan, Praveenraj & Thackeray, Tejas. (2020). *Schistura hiranyakeshi* a new loach (Cypriniformes: Nemacheilidae) from Maharashtra, Northern Western Ghats, India, pp. 49-56.

Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board



Chairperson

Thiru K.Ramachandran, Honorable Minister for Forests

Secretary

Ms Mita Banerjee IFS, APCCF

Board Members

1. Dr. D. Narasimhan, Associate Professor, Dept of Botany (Retd), Madras Christian College, Chennai
2. Dr. N. Krishnakumar IFS (Retd), Ex-PCCF (HOFF) - (nominated as Board Member as per the G.O. (D) No.191 Environment and Forest (FR.5) Department, dated 23.12.2020)
3. Mr. T.S. Srinivasamurthy IFS (Retd), Ex-PCCF and Chairman, Arasu Rubber Corporation
4. Dr. C.P. Raj Kumar, M.D, Nalam Hospital, Theni
5. Dr. Jayashree Vencatesan, Care Earth Trust, Chennai

Ex-Officio Members

1. Additional Chief Secretary, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department
2. Principal Secretary to Government, Environment, Climate Change and Forests Department
3. Agricultural Production Commissioner and Secretary to Government, Agriculture and Farmers Welfare department
4. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Head of Department)
5. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden

Permanent Special Invitees

1. Additional Chief Secretary to Government, Animal Husbandry, Dairying, Fisheries and Fishermen Welfare Department
2. Principal Secretary to Government, Industries Department
3. The Member Secretary, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board

Editorial Team

1. Ms Mita Banerjee IFS, APCCF and Secretary, TNBB
2. Ajeeth A N, BSIP Intern, TNBB