



NBWL Approval to Sharavathi Hydroelectric Project

[Source: TH](#)

Sharavathi Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project in **Karnataka** has got **in-principle approval** from the [National Board for Wildlife \(NBWL\)](#), despite **ecological concerns** over its impact on the **Sharavathi Valley Lion-tailed Macaque Sanctuary** in the **Western Ghats**.

- The project will now seek approval under the **Forest Conservation Act, 1980**, before returning for final NBWL approval.

Sharavathi Valley Wildlife Sanctuary

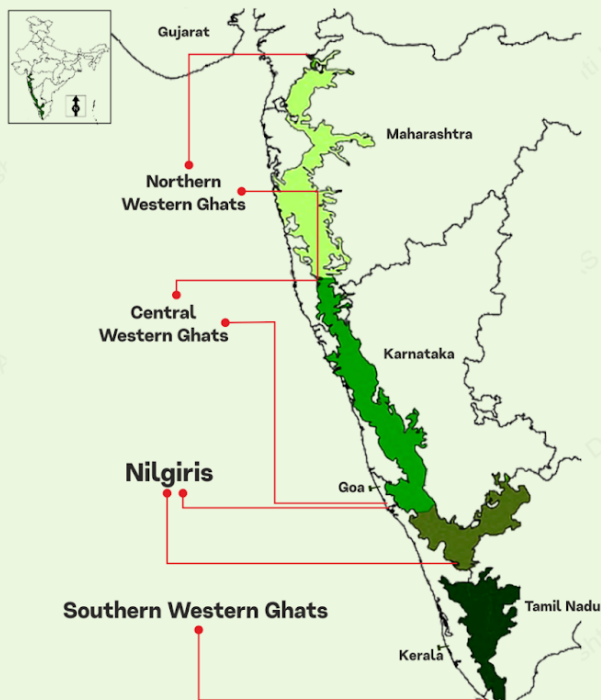
- It is located in the **Sharavathi River Valley** in Shivamogga District of **Karnataka**, spans 431.23 sq. km in the **Western Ghats**.
- Rich in flora and fauna, it houses flora species like **Dhoopa, Gulmavu, and Nandi etc.**
 - Wildlife includes **bison, spotted deer, tigers, panthers, and lion-tailed macaques.**
- Attractions include **Jog Falls, Linganamakki Reservoir**, and diverse animal and bird species.

Sharavathi Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project

- It is a proposed **2,000 MW project** in **Sharavathi Valley Lion-tailed Macaque Sanctuary**, using pumped storage between **Gerusoppa** (lower) & **Talakalale Dams** (upper) via **underground turbines** for **grid stability** and **renewable energy**.

Western Ghats

One of the four biodiversity hotspots of India; recognised as a UNESCO WHS (2012)



Rivers (originating)

- West-flowing: Periyar, Bharathappuzha, Netravati, Sharavathi, Mandovi
- East-flowing: Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri, Tunga, Bhadra, Bhima, Malaprabha, Ghataprabha, Hemavathi, Kabini

Endemic Species

- Nilgiri tahr (IUCN Status - EN)
- Lion-tailed macaque (IUCN Status - EN)

Imp Protected Areas

- Biosphere Reserves - Agasthyamala and Nilgiri
- NP - Silent Valley, Bandipur, Eravikulam, Wayanad-Mudumalai, Nagarhole
- TR - Kalakad-Mundanthurai, Periyar

Imp Passes

- Thal Ghat Pass (Kasara Ghat)
- Bhor Ghat Pass
- Palakkad Gap (Pal Ghat)
- Amba Ghat Pass
- Naneghat Pass
- Amboli Ghat Pass

Significance

- Hydroelectricity production
- Influences Indian monsoon weather patterns
- Carbon sequestration (neutralise ~4 MT of carbon every year)
- One of the 8 global hottest hotspots of biodiversity (due to richness in species and endemism)
- Rich in iron, manganese and bauxite ores, timber, pepper, cardamom, oil palm and rubber
- Sizeable indigenous population (including PVTGs)
- Important tourism/pilgrimage centres

Major Threats

- Mining, Industrialisation
- Massive extraction of forest produce
- Human-wildlife conflict, encroachment, illegal hunting
- Livestock grazing, deforestation
- Large hydropower projects
- Climate change

Imp Committees

- Gadgil Committee (2011) (Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel)
 - Recommendation: All of WG be declared as Ecological Sensitive Area (ESA) with only limited development allowed in graded zones.
- Kasturirangan Committee (2013)
 - Recommendation: Instead of whole, only 37% of the total area of WG be brought under ESA + complete ban on mining, quarrying and sand mining be imposed in ESA.

Names

- Sahyadri - northern Maharashtra; Sahya Parvatham - Kerala

Diverted views about Mt. type

- View 1: Block Mt. formed due to down warping of a part of land into Arabian Sea
- View 2: Not true mt. rather the faulted edge of Deccan Plateau

Major Rocks

- Basalt, granite gneiss, khondalites, metamorphic gneisses, crystalline limestone, iron ore

Geographical Extent

- Satpura (in north) to the end of TN at Kanyakumari (in south)

Mt. Ranges

- Nilgiri ranges, Shevaroys and Tirumala range
- Highest peak - Anamudi (Kerala)



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What is the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)?

- About:** NBWL is a **statutory body** constituted in **2003** under **Section 5A** of **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**, replacing the **Indian Board for Wildlife (1952)** as an **apex advisory body** on **wildlife conservation** and **forest development**.
- Composition:** The **NBWL** is a **47-member statutory board**, chaired by the **Prime Minister**, with the **Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** as the **Vice Chairperson**.
 - Members include officials like the **Chief of Army Staff**, **Defence Secretary**, **Expenditure Secretary**, and **10 eminent conservationists** nominated by the Central Government. The **Additional Director General of Forests (Wildlife)** serves as the **Member-Secretary**.

- **Key Functions:** It is an **advisory body** to the Central Government, responsible for **guiding wildlife conservation policies**, reviewing matters related to **wildlife protection**.
 - It approves projects in and around **protected areas (PAs)** and **eco-sensitive zones** (within 10 km).
- **Standing Committee:** The **Standing Committee** is a smaller body under NBWL with **up to 10 members**, chaired by the **Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**.
 - It serves as a **project clearance body**, responsible for evaluating and approving proposals in **protected areas and eco-sensitive zones**, while the full NBWL focuses on **broader policy decisions**.



WILDLIFE CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

Constitutional Provisions for Wildlife

42nd Amendment

Act, 1976: Forests & Protection of Wild Animals and Birds (moved from State to Concurrent List)

Article

48 A: State shall endeavor to protect & improve environment and safeguard forests and wildlife of country

Article

51 A (g): Fundamental duty to protect & improve natural environment including forests and Wildlife

Legal Frameworks

Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

Biological Diversity Act, 2002

Major Conservation Initiatives

Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (IDWH):

- ⌚ Financial assistance provided to State/UT Governments for protection and conservation of wildlife
- ⌚ A Centrally Sponsored Scheme

National Wildlife Action Plan (2017-2031)

Guidelines for Eco-tourism in Protected Areas

Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation

Wildlife Crime Control Bureau: To combat wildlife-related crimes

Wildlife Division (MoEFCC):

- ⌚ Policy and law for conservation of biodiversity and Protected Area network
- ⌚ Technical and financial support to the State/ UTs under IDWH, Central Zoo Authority and Wildlife Institute of India

Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB):

Collection, collation of intelligence & its dissemination, establishment of centralized Wild Life crime databank, coordination etc.

Wildlife Crime Control:

- ⌚ Operation Save Kurma
- ⌚ Operation Thunderbird

Species-Specific Initiatives

- Protection and conservation of Greater Adjutant in Gangetic riverine tract
- Dolphin Conservation in Non-Protected Area Segment of Ganga River
- Conservation Breeding Centre for Wild water buffalo (2020)
- Recovery programme for Snow leopard (2009)
- Recovery programme for Vultures (2006)
- Project Elephant (1992)
- Project Tiger/National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) (1973)

India's Collaboration with Global Wildlife Conservation Efforts

- ⌚ Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
- ⌚ Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)
- ⌚ Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- ⌚ World Heritage Convention
- ⌚ Ramsar Convention
- ⌚ The Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network (TRAFFIC)
- ⌚ United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)
- ⌚ International Whaling Commission (IWC)
- ⌚ International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- ⌚ Global Tiger Forum (GTF)



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What are the Key Facts Related to Lion-Tailed Macaques?

- **About:** The **Lion-tailed Macaque (Macaca silenus)** is an **old-world monkey** species **endemic to the Western Ghats of India**.

- Also called the “**wanderoo**” or “**beard ape**”, it is known for its **distinctive light-coloured mane** surrounding its **black face and chin**.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Size:** Among the **smallest macaques**; weighs **2-10 kg**, body length **42-61 cm**, tail length **~25 cm** with a **black tuft** (larger in males).
 - **Appearance:** **Black fur** with **light-grey/silver mane** around head and chin.
 - **Social Behaviour:** Lives in **hierarchical groups (10-20)**; **shy and territorial**. **Dominant males** produce loud ‘**whoop**’ calls to warn intruders.
 - **Activity Zone:** **Arboreal**, spending time in the **upper canopy** of **tropical moist evergreen forests**.
- **Habitat & Distribution:**
 - **Endemic to Western Ghats**, found in **Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu**; prefers **undisturbed, continuous evergreen forest**; **highly sensitive to fragmentation**.
 - Found in regions like **Anamalai Hills, Nelliampathy, Nilambur Ghats, Sholayar, Gavi, Sabarimala, Vallimalai Hills, Agumbe, and Valparai plateau (Anamalai Tiger Reserve)**.
- **Diet & Ecological Role:** **Primarily frugivorous**, eats **fruits, seeds, leaves, buds, insects, small vertebrates**. It plays a **key role in seed dispersal** and **forest ecosystem health**.
- **Threats:** **Over 99% habitat loss** due to **deforestation, agriculture, urbanisation** which led to **fragmentation, restricted movement and genetic flow**.
 - **Human-wildlife conflict** is increasing due to **habitat degradation** and **food scarcity**, causing **behavioural changes**.
 - As per **Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI)** and **University of Mysore (2024)** report, only **around 4,200 remain**, just **25% of the original population**.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN Red List**: **Endangered**
 - **CITES**: **Appendix I**
 - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**: **Schedule I**

Note: Strategic Habitat Use amid Human Pressure

- A study by the **Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS)** in **Silent Valley National Park, Kerala** found that **lion-tailed macaques** adapt their **behavior based on human presence**.
 - A troop in the **buffer zone** (more disturbed) used a **smaller range** and stayed mostly in the **mid-canopy** (94.2%), avoiding the ground.
 - In contrast, a troop in the **core zone** (less disturbed) used a **larger area** and also used the **forest floor**, showing the species' **ecological flexibility**.

POPULATION

UNDER 4000

LIFE SPAN

ABOUT 20 YEARS

WEIGHT
Males 7 kg
Females 5 kg

LTMS ARE FRUGIVORES
FEED ON: jackfruit, Cullenia exarillata (Indian wild durian) seeds, and sometimes insects, small reptiles, and mammals.

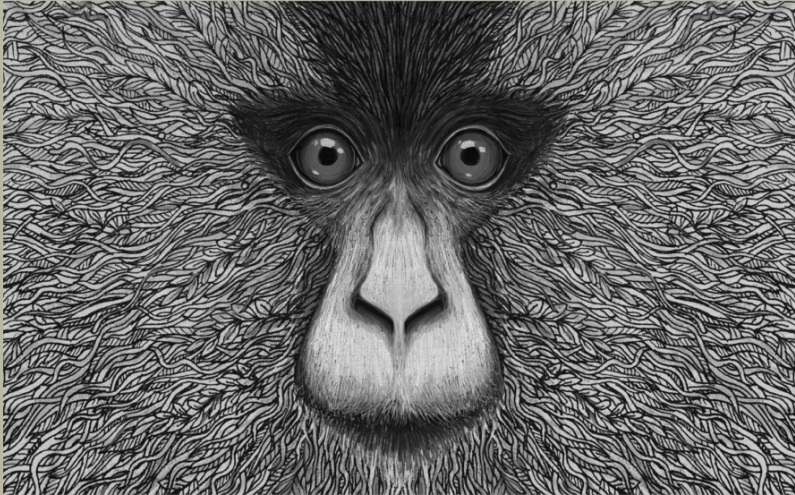
ROLE IN THE FOREST
Seed dispersal agents.
Carry food stored in their cheek pouches over significant distances in the forest. Seeds are also spread through droppings.

ALL IN THE FAMILY
• Live in troops of 10-25 members, who roam, occupy, and patrol a home area of about 5 square kilometres.
• Troops have a dominant male.

BABIES
Female LTMs achieve sexual maturity at age 5, males at 6. A female will have one baby once in three years. Maximum 3 babies in her lifetime.

CONSERVATION STATUS THEIR FUTURE IS BLEAK. THOUGH NUMBERS HAVE IMPROVED SLIGHTLY IN THE LAST DECADE, THEY REMAIN ENDANGERED.

LION-TAILED MACAQUE



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The lion-tailed macaque is *Macaca silenus*. The Latin name means "monkey deity of the woodlands". In some areas they are also called wanderers.

↓

MALAYALAM
nella manthi

↓

TAMIL
singavaal kurangu

↓

KANNADA
singalika

THREATS
• Fragmentation of forests. • Roads cutting through forests, breaking the canopy. • Expansion of human settlements and agriculture has shrunk their spaces.
• Contact with human beings and livestock causes risk of disease.

SAVING LTMS There is hope. Dedicated organisations like the Nature Conservation Foundation (with a field base in Valparai) are working to find solutions to the threats LTMs face.

GEOGRAPHICAL RANGE
Southern and Central Western Ghats. States of Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu

HABITAT
UPPER CANOPY OF MATURE RAINFORESTS

COOO...
one of 17 sounds and facial gestures an LTM makes to communicate

WHAT WE CAN ALL DO
• If you spot them, don't feed them. • Don't speed on roads through forests • Be mindful of wildlife crossing
• Don't litter, dispose all waste in proper bins.

This Old World monkey is an arboreal creature, usually found high up in the canopy



large silvery mane
brown eyes
stores food in large cheek pouches
bluish-black shiny hair
long fingers and dextrous opposable thumbs
prominent tuft of hair at end of tail

CANOPY BRIDGES have been created across some roads that cut through the forests. LTMs can use these to cross forest patches without coming to ground level.

ILLUSTRATION: ROMAN DAVOTRE PHOTO: CHRISTIAN MUKHERJEE, TEXT: VISHAL PESCHERKAR, DESIGN: DIVYA MEHTA

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Which one of the following groups of animals belongs to the category of endangered species? (2012)

- (a) Great Indian Bustard, Musk Deer, Red Panda and Asiatic Wild Ass
- (b) Kashmir Stag, Cheetal, Blue Bull and Great Indian Bustard
- (c) Snow Leopard, Swamp Deer, Rhesus Monkey and Saras (Crane)
- (d) Lion-tailed Macaque, Blue Bull, Hanuman Langur and Cheetal

Ans: (a)

Q. If a particular plant species is placed under Schedule VI of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, what is the implication? (2020)

- (a) A licence is required to cultivate that plant.

- (b) Such a plant cannot be cultivated under any circumstances.
- (c) It is a Genetically Modified crop plant.
- (d) Such a plant is invasive and harmful to the ecosystem.

Ans: (a)

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