

Appraisal of Conservation Strategies of Veligonda Forest Range of Eastern Ghats, Andhra Pradesh, India

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Abstract : Veligonda and adjoining hill range spread along about 170 Km North to South in Kadapa and Nellore Districts stretching a little further into Prakasam District. The latitude in general ranges up to 1000m. The forests are generally dry deciduous type. Veligonda and adjoining hill ranges comprise of Palakonda, Seshachalam, Lankamala and the terminal part of Nallamalais from mid-region of Southern Eastern Ghats. The Veligonda range which separates the Nellore district from Kadapa and Kurnool is the backbone of the Eastern Ghats, starting from Nagari promontory in Chittoor district. It runs in a northerly direction along the western border of the Nellore district, with a raising elevation of 3,626 ft at Penchalakona in Raipur thaluk. Veligonda hill ranges are high in altitude and have deep valleys. Among the Veligondas range of hills the Durgam in Venkatagiri range and Penchalakona are the most prominent and are situated 914 meters above mean sea level. It has more than 3000 species of plants along with 500 animal species. The unique specialty of this region is the presence of *Pterocarpus santalinus*(endangered) and *Santalum album* (vulnerable). In the present study, an attempt is made to assess the efforts that are going on to conserve the biodiversity of flora and fauna of this region. Various conservation strategies were suggested to protect the biodiversity and richness of Veligonda forest, hill region of Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh. The major threats and the reasons for the dwindling species richness are poor rainfall, adverse climatic conditions, robbery of Red sanders and poaching of animals by the local tribals. Efforts are to be made to conserve some of the animals by both in situ and ex-situ methods. More awareness is to be developed among the local communities who are dwelling in the vicinity and importance of conservation is to be emphasized to them. Anthropogenic attachments are to be made by introducing more numbers of sacred groves. Gross enforcement of law is to be made to protect the various forest resources in this area. The important species with the medicinal values are to be identified. It was found that two important wildlife sanctuaries named Sri Lankamalleswarawildlife sanctuary and Sripenusila Narasimha wildlife sanctuary are working for the comprehensive conservation of the environment in this area. Apart from this more than 38 important sacred grooves are there where the plants and animals are protected by local Yanadi and other communities.

Keywords : biodiversity, wild life sanctuary, habitat destruction, eastern Ghats

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