

Flamingos get permanent residency status in Mumbai

1,690 hectares including mangroves between Airoli and Vashi bridges along Thane Creek declared flamingo sanctuary

Yogesh.Naik
@timesgroup.com
TWEETS @MumbaiMirror

The state government has declared the area along the Thane Creek as flamingo sanctuary, which will be spread over an area of 1,690 hectares, including 896 hectares of mangroves and 794 hectares of adjacent water body.

The sanctuary will be located on the western bank of the Thane Creek, between the Airoli and Vashi

bridges that connect Mumbai with Navi Mumbai. The government decision is a significant step for the conservation of this unique natural environment with its eclectic mix of mangroves, mudflats and the threatened species of birds.

Since 1994, the Thane Creek has been attracting flamingos in large numbers. By November, over 30,000 flamingos descend here and occupy the mudflats and the bordering mangroves. They stay here till May, after which

most of them migrate to Bhuj in Gujarat for breeding, leaving a small resident population.

N Vasudevan, chief conservator of forests (Mangrove Cell), said that the Revenue and Forests Department issued a notification on Thursday, declaring the northern part of the Thane Creek as a wildlife sanctuary under Section 18 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

The sanctuary, which has been named the Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary, will be the second marine sanctuary in the state, after Malvan.

The eco-sensitive zone of the sanctuary will be the adjoining mangrove areas on either side of the creek, which are already notified as reserve forests. The Mumbai Mangrove Conservation Unit, under the Mangrove Cell, will be responsible for the management of the sanctuary.

Among the flamingos that arrive in Mumbai, almost 90% are the Lesser Flamingo breed (a species of flamingo that inhabit the sub-Saharan Africa and India), and the

remaining are the Greater Flamingos (the most widespread species of the flamingo family, found in Africa, southern Asia, the Middle East and southern Europe).

Besides supporting a large congregation of flamingos, the Thane Creek is a refuge for many resident and migratory birds. In all, about 200 species of birds have been reported from this area, including the globally threatened species such as the Greater Spotted Eagle.

Other bird species include the Pied Avocet, Western Reef Heron, Black-headed Ibis, Common Redshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Curlew Sandpiper, Brown-headed Gull, Whiskered Tern, Gull-billed Tern, Caspian Tern, Little Tern, White Bellied Sea Eagle, and Eurasian Marsh Harrier. The Birdlife International has already declared the Thane Creek as an important bird area (IBA).

The Mangrove Cell has already initiated baseline studies and rapid biodiversity assessment of the sanc-

tuary area with assistance from the Indo-German (GIZ) Project on the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Marine Protected Areas (CMPA). These studies would help in the preparation of a scientific management plan for the sanctuary and for its sustainable management.

The ecosystem will be closely monitored and shielded from serious threats like discharge of effluents, dumping of sewage and other biotic interferences.

At the same time, the scientific community, wildlife enthusiasts and the general public could enjoy access to this natural wonder in a regulated manner. Suitable amenities will be provided for such regulated access to the site, without causing disturbance to the ecosystem.

With the Thane Creek becoming a flamingo sanctuary, the state government's waterways project, wherein it proposed to run the hovercraft services to Mulund via the creek, will have to be abandoned.

Welcoming the move, Stalin Dayanand, director of NGO Vanashakti, who has been fighting to protect the wetlands in and around the city, said, "The Thane Creek is the first wetland sanctuary in the state. This development will propel the city on the world map for maintaining two sanctuaries, which are the Sanjay Gandhi National Park and the flamingo park."

K.K. CHOUDHARY

Out-of-school kids change location, foil enrolment

Arita.Sarkar
@timesgroup.com
TWEETS @sarkararita

EOver a month after the state-wide out-of-school survey, BMC authorities are still facing obstacles in admitting the children in schools, mainly due to the fact that a sizeable number of surveyed children have changed location.

A week after the survey identified 10,700 children as out-of-school, several wards began enrolling them in schools in their jurisdiction. In M-East ward, which includes Chembur, only 40 per cent of 1,140 such children could be accommodated in schools in the area.

"Most schools here are packed. We managed to admit students

where space was available. We are trying to figure out a way to admit all the students and will arrange infrastructure for them," said Ajay Wani, administrative officer, M-East ward.

Wani, like many other ward officers, also said a significant number of such children could not found at the addresses in the survey forms. While M-East has not been able to find 20 per cent of the students, K-East said over 60 per cent of the 231 children identified were 'missing'.

Jayashree Yadav, administrative officer of L ward which includes Kurla, had identified 1,261 children of which about 20 per cent have migrated. "We had found many children who live under the flyover or on train platforms. They have changed location due to the rains," she said.

She added it was particularly difficult to convince students above the age of 12 to return to school. "Most of the 400 children we successfully admitted in schools are aged 6-10 years. Older children are more interested in earning a living for their family," Yadav said.

Ward officers in Mulund say parents are insisting on English medium schools, where 50 of 107 out-of-

school students have been admitted.

"Teachers of BMC schools in our area have been visiting the children twice a week and bringing them back in their cars to get them admitted in schools.

"However, several parents have refused to send their children, saying they only want an English medium school. Only six of the 56 schools in our area are English medium," said Pranjali Gosavi, administrative officer, T ward.

JR Keluskar, deputy education officer, BMC education department said no deadline has been set for admitting such children in schools. "In keeping with RTE norms, ensuring that every child gets education is a continuous process. Our teachers will continue to reach out and bring the children back to school," he said.

Many children living under the flyover, on platforms have changed location due to the rains

JAYASHREE YADAV
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, L WARD

