

Flamingo haven Thane creek declared **wildlife sanctuary**

BOOST TO BIODIVERSITY Govt declares northern part of Thane Creek a sanctuary, to allot funds soon

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MUMBAI: To better protect its annual visitors, the Maharashtra government has declared the northern part of Thane Creek, which attracts thousands of flamingos, as a wildlife sanctuary.

Spread over an area of 1,690 hectares, which includes 896 hectares of mangroves and 794 hectares of land adjacent to a water body, the sanctuary has been named the Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary, and will be Maharashtra's second marine sanctuaries, after Malvan.

A notification for this, under section 18 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, was issued by the revenue and forest department on Thursday.

Forest Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar told HT that considering the large population of flamingos that comes to this location every year, the site had to be safeguarded. "There are two objectives of declaring the



Mungantiwar said the forest department will receive a detailed report about the requirements for developing the sanctuary.

of the sanctuary. The protected area will mainly include the mangrove forests and wetlands of Mulund, Vikhroli, Bhandup,

ATTRACTIONS OF THE THANE CREEK

The Thane Creek is designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) – areas with more than 100 species of birds – by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and Birdlife International

Since 1994, it has been documented that the creek attracts flamingos in large numbers

By November, more than 30,000 of these birds occupy the mudflats and the bordering mangroves of the creek

Almost 90% of the flamingo population consists of Lesser Flamingos, which are rarer, and the rest are the commoner Greater Flamingos. A large

number of waders are also spotted along with them

The area is also a refuge for many other resident and migratory birds. In all, about 200 species of birds have been reported from this area, which include globally threatened species such as the Greater Spotted Eagle and Osprey

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, Eurasian Marsh Harrier etc.

mix of mangroves, mudflats and threatened species of birds," said N Vasudevan, chief conservator of forest, mangrove cell. "By mid-

gateway to this creek," he added.

Environmentalists said the decision should have been taken much earlier. "Albeit late, this