

# Kerala on a Mission to Conserve Sacred Groves

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| <b>DIVERSITY IN GROVES</b> |               |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| Birds                      | 475 species   |
| Mammals                    | 100 species   |
| Reptiles                   | 156 varieties |
| Amphibians                 | 91 species    |
| Fish                       | 196 species   |
| Butterflies                | 150 species   |

  

| <b>LARGEST IN STATE</b> |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Iringole Karvu</b>   |  |
| LOCATION: Perumbavoor   |  |
| AREA: 20 hectares       |  |



In an attempt to arrest the depletion of the rich gene pool and protect the hotspots of local biodiversity, the State Medicinal Plants Board (SMPB) is embarking on a project for conservation of sacred groves in Kerala.

Funded by the National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB), the Rs.1.34-crore project involves conservation and resource augmentation of sacred groves with medicinal plants in over 100 hectares.

The proposed activities include bio-fencing, inventorisation of plant wealth and cleaning up of water bodies.

The NMPB has released the first instalment of Rs.53.75 lakh for the three-year project. “The idea is to conserve the remaining patches of rich biodiversity and prevent further encroachments,” said SMPB Chief Executive Officer K.G. Sreekumar.

## **Healthy environment**

The project seeks to conserve the diversity of indigenous medicinal plants, maintain ecological balance and enhance ground water resources. The other objectives are to ensure a healthy environment, besides creating awareness about conservation and tracing the history of vegetation in the locality.

Distinct and unique in biological diversity, sacred groves are valuable gene pools of immense ecological significance.

They are rich repositories of valuable medicinal plants including rare, endangered, and threatened species.

Most sacred groves also harbour a perennial water source. “Conserving sacred groves will help preserve these assets for future generations,” Mr. Sreekumar added.

### **Applications invited**

The SMPB has invited applications from individuals and trusts with ownership rights to sacred groves. Physical verification of the groves to be included in the project is expected to begin shortly.

“Saplings of native species will be planted to augment the floral diversity, and name boards will be installed to identify each species,” he said.

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