

Executive Summary

Mumbai is among the rare metros that boast of a national park within its boundary. Slum encroachment at Sanjay Gandhi National Park at Borivali in the western suburbs has taken a toll on its flora and fauna. Right from its origin, the park has undergone various changes that have damaged its wildlife comprising distinct species of animals and birds, and the forest cover. The city-park interface requires considerable attention to ensure that the park is adequately protected. Today, many thousands of families and dwellings encroach upon and sometimes spill into the protected area as housing needs expand in the growing city. The encroachments by slum colonies into densely forested areas have been taking place gradually since the early 1970's and continued to take place till about 1985. This may be called the first stage of encroachment, which was on a moderate scale. The second stage of encroachments took place at an accelerated pace during the period 1985 to 1994. The final and most disastrous phase of this process began in November 1994

Sanjay Gandhi National Park faces a number of threats. The most important and a serious problem which threatens the Sanjay Gandhi National Park is the alleged peripheral encroachments/ illegal settlements. There are around 25,000 hutments which are illegal occupants and have been termed as encroachments. The increasing urban sprawl seems to be eating into the green cover of the national park. Thus the increasing urban sprawl and various kind of pressures associated with the increased urban sprawl is the issues which needs to dealt with on priority

The Encroachment / Illegal Hutments/ settlements project was undertaken by the SGNP in collaboration and technical support from the Wildlife and We Protection Foundation and the SATS Integrated Conservation Solutions Private Ltd, both from Mumbai. To deal with the serious threat of encroachments to the national parks, it was decided jointly by the SGNP and the aforesaid two organisations that a detailed ground survey is required to be undertaken along with spatial reference to High Resolution Satellite Imageries. For the purpose of the project the Digital Globe- Worldview II satellite data was used and a detailed ground survey of all the illegal settlements/ encroachment was done by the combined team of the three organisations.

The official encroachment record authenticated by the Range Forest Officers concerned of Tulsi, Yeour and Krishnagiri Upvan were collected. Data collection formats were developed by the WNW and SATS Team in consultation with the Officers and staff of the SGNP. The survey was started from Kanheri round, continued through Malad, Gundgaon, Yeour and Ghodbandar round and the Krishnagiri Upvan range was dealt in the end. GPS coordinates and geo-tagged photos of every single hutment as per records and suspected to be an encroachment were taken independently and at the same time - Geotagged Photographs of the hutment were captured. The total area encroached throughout the Park is 255.359 Ha. and the total open area within the encroachment is 75.29514932 Ha.

This has been an extensive task and best possible attempts have been made to get all the findings at one place in an Integrated and a Comprehensive manner so that the deliverables may be used regularly by the SGNP Management in day to day management, monitoring and evaluation. Though a sincere attempt has been made to map each and every hutment suspected to be or confirmed to be an encroachment, hand held GPSs have been used and thus the limitations may kindly be understood. The entire exercise has been carried out along with the field staff namely the Range Forest Officers, Round Officers and Beat Guards and the official records of the SGNP pertaining to encroachment has been strongly relied upon. The field survey has been conducted completely under the guidance, directions and presence of the field staff of SGNP as per instructions for the Chief Conservator of Forests and Director, Sanjay Gandhi National Park.

Wildlife & We Protection Foundation