

Agasthyamala Reserve

Biosphere

April 5, 2021

About Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve

- The Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve (ABR) was established in 2001 and straddles the border of Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram Districts in Kerala and Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari Districts in Tamil Nadu, South India at the southern end of the Western Ghats.
- The Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve (ABR) has got its name into the UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves (BR).
- Located in the Western Ghats in the south of the country, the Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve has peaks reaching 1,868 m above sea level.
- Consisting mostly of tropical forest, the site is home to 2,254 species of higher plants including about 400 that are endemic.
- Unique genetic reservoir of cultivated plants, in particular cardamom, jamune, nutmeg, pepper and plantain.
- Three wildlife sanctuaries, Shendurney, Peppara and Neyyar, are located in the site, as well as the Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger reserve.
- A number of tribal settlements comprising a total population of 3,000 inhabit the biosphere reserve.
- Agasthyamalai is also home to the Kanikaran, one of the oldest surviving ancient tribes in the world.
- Biosphere reserves are areas of terrestrial and coastal ecosystems promoting solutions to reconcile the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use.

Flora

- Apart from inhabiting 2,000 varieties of medicinal plants and about 50 rare and endangered species, Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve
- It is home to about 400 Red Listed Plants and over 125 species of orchids and rare, endemic and threatened plant species.
- Almost one-fourth of India's total plant species are found here.
- Arogyapacha, one such famous and rare medicinal plant is found here.

Fauna

- This Biosphere Reserve hosts about 79 species of mammals (out of which 20 species are endemic), 88 species of reptiles (out of which 45 species are endemic), 45 species of amphibians (out of which 30 species are endemic), 46 species of fishes (out of which 10 species are endemic) and 337 species of birds (out of which 20 species are endemic).
- Some of the rare animals found here are Tiger, Ancient Elephant and Nilgiri Tahr.