

CHENNAI CIRCLE

ABOUT CHENNAI CIRCLE

In G.O.Ms.No.638, E&F dept. dt. 02.09.89, the erstwhile development Circle at Chennai was renamed as territorial Circle viz. Chennai Circle with Headquarters at Chennai. Later it was renamed as Chengalpattu Circle in Government Lr. No. 31902/FR-I/90-1 dt. 28.08.1990 and was functioning at Chengalpattu from 4.10.90 to 31.07.1994. Again it was renamed as Chennai Circle in G.O.Ms.No.276, E&F dept. dt. 14.09.1993 and started functioning at Chennai with effect from 01.08.1994.

Chennai Circle comprises of three districts viz. Chennai, Chengalpattu and Tiruvallur. Total forest area of this Circle is 438.769 sq. km. In order to manage the forest area, it has been distributed into three territorial divisions viz. 1) Chengalpattu division, 2) Tiruvallur division, 3) Chennai Forest division and one special division viz. 4) Social Forestry division, Chengalpattu.

DIVISION WISE FOREST AREA

Division wise details of forest area under the control of Chennai Circle are as follows:

Sl. No.	Name of the division	Reserve Forest	Reserve Land	Total Forest Area
Territorial divisions		(in sq. km.)		
1.	District Forest Officer, Chengalpattu division at Kancheepuram	196.100	16.760	212.860
2.	District Forest Officer, Tiruvallur division, Tiruvallur	181.020	--	181.020
3.	District Forest Officer, Chennai Forest division, Chennai	37.409	7.480	44.889
Special divisions				
4.	Divisional Forest Officer, Social Forestry division, Chengalpattu	--	--	--
TOTAL		414.529	24.240	438.769

DISTRICT WISE FOREST COVER

Total Forest cover in Chennai Circle is 6.92% of the Geographical area (FSI, State of Forest Report-2015). Area wise, Kancheepuram district has the largest forest cover (296 sq. km) in the Circle followed by Tiruvallur (247 sq. km.) and Chennai (13 sq. km).

NATURE OF FOREST VEGETATION

Most of the areas are located on rocky terrain and some on plain lands. They support poor vegetation. The natural forests in this Circle are in a highly degraded condition

and as such they are gradually being converted into man-made forest by artificial regeneration. Planting is done only in gaps and existing vegetation is retained ensures proper conservation of existing species. The areas under forests were managed systematically besides collecting Minor Forest Produce without affecting the vegetation. Clearance of natural forests was stopped to avoid the disturbance to Wildlife habitats.

Sl. No.	Vegetation Type	% of total forest area
1.	Sparse forests	35.29
2.	Plantations	13.42
3.	Sheet rock, stony and rocky sites	1.59
4.	Dense and Sparse scrub	46.72
5.	Degraded forest area	2.98

Chennai Circle is blessed with three out of the 9 major forest types of the State viz. Tropical dry deciduous, Tropical dry thorn scrub, Tropical dry evergreen.

RED SANDERS IN TIRUVALLUR

Tiruvallur is coming under the natural range of Red sanders. The natural range is restricted to typically dry, hilly, often rocky ground, altitudes of 150-900m, in areas receiving around 100mm of rain in each of the two annual monsoons. Tamil Nadu Forest department has planted Red sanders trees inside Reserve Forest of Tiruvallur from 1958 to 1994. Now Tiruvallur Forest Division has 55 Red sanders plantations with more than 1 lakh Red sanders trees. Red sanders seedlings planted recently in reserve forests of Tiruvallur shows good survival rate.

Red Sanders is deciduous tree. Bark is blackish-brown, deeply cleft into rectangular pirates. Heartwood is dark purple and exuding a deed red juice when cut. The wood of most trees has a normal grain; however, there is also a rare variant with a 'wavy' grain. The heartwood of this species is used in the making of furniture, carvings and musical instruments and is mostly exported. It is a Scheduled Timber and highly valuable species which needs to be protected and regenerated.

ADMINISTRATION

Forests in Chennai Circle are administered by the Conservator of Forests in the I.F.S. cadre, assisted by 2 territorial District Forest Officers for Chengalpattu and Tiruvallur divisions which are cadre posts and 2 S.F.S. Officers in the rank of Deputy Conservators of

Forests in Social Forestry division in Chengalpattu and Chennai territorial division. The total staff strength of the Circle is 401.

FOREST PROTECTION

All forest areas are well protected by beat sub-ordinates. Special parties conduct surprise raids at frequent intervals to put down illicit felling/removal of forest produce, illicit grazing to enforce strict observance of Timber transit Rules and protect the Wildlife too. Forest Protection Squad, Chennai also conducts frequent raids. Natural resources are given strict protection. Attempts are being made to involve local people in protecting and developing forest lands. Action is being taken for evicting the old encroachments with the help of district administration.

TOURIST SPOTS

Pallikaranai Marsh Land

Pallikaranai is one of the last remaining natural wetlands of Chennai and represents a rare example of coastal wetland that is largely freshwater found on the 'Coast Biogeographic Zone' of India. The topography of the marsh is such that it always retains some storage in it. The ecological complexity of the marsh is also due to its variation in depth, sedimentation, vegetation, water chemistry and oxidation. The Conservation Authority of Pallikaranai Marshland has been formed during 2012 for Restoration and Conservation of Pallikaranai Marshland. So far, 694.88.5 ha. out of the total marshland area of 807.08 ha. is brought under the control of Forest Department.

About 114 species of plants are found in the wetland including 29 species of grass. These plants species include species of medicinal importance, native grass species as well as wild relatives of cultivated crops.

The marsh is home to 164 species of birds, 10 species of mammals, 21 species of reptiles, 10 species of amphibians, 50 species of fishes, 9 species of molluscs (snails and clams), 5 species of crustaceans, and 7 species of butterflies.

A large numbers of fish-eating birds such as cormorants, pelicans, storks, herons, egrets and terns have been recorded from the marsh. Further, the copious supply of benthic food attracts the abundance and diversity of shore and wading birds, including trans-boundary migrants, and the Greater Flamingo. Whereas reports of species like the Godwit, Knot, Ruff, Grey-headed Lapwing and other migratory birds in the inland wetlands of south

India are sporadic and sparse, in the Pallikaranai marsh, the abundance and frequency of sighting of these species have been on the rise year after year.

The marsh supports over 40,000 birds during migratory season and more than 5000 birds during non-migratory (summer) season. Migrants like the sandpipers and teals are common here. It has bird bio-diversity about four times that of Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary.

This marsh is also important as it collects floodwater and increases groundwater levels in the region. Pallikaranai is one of the 94 wetlands identified under National Wetland Conservation and Management Programme (NWCMP) of the Government of India and is also one of the prioritized wetlands of Tamil Nadu.

PHOTOS







WORLD WETLAND DAY CELEBRATIONS



GUDIYAM CAVES

The Gudiyam caves are majestic prehistoric rock shelters that occur within thickly foliated Pulikundram Reserve Forest (Red hills Range, Tiruvallur Division) at an altitude of about 240m MSL near Gudiyam village. In these prehistoric rock shelters, Stone Age people and their culture thrived lakhs of years ago. Robert Bruce Foote, the British geologist in the year 1864, first investigated these prehistoric rock shelters and later documented in geological Survey of India memoir in 1873. Excavations by Dr.K.D Banerjee and his team from Archaeological Survey of India, in Gudiyam and nearby area of Gudiyam rock shelters (during 1962-63) brought to light the first systematic record of Stone Age artefacts and their cultural aspects. Excavation near Athirampakkam (near Gudiyam) by Shanti pappu and her team indicated earliest occupation of this region by Acheulian people between 1.07-1.08 million years ago, currently the oldest site in India. It is a matter of great pride to the state and Tamil Nadu forest department, that a site where prehistoric culture thrived is still preserved.



Irula tribes in Gudiyam village still live in traditional huts made up of Red mud walls with palm leaf roof. Irulas were closely associated with the forest and have tremendous knowledge of the forest ecosystem. Forests with green and flawless trees and bushes can be seen near Gudiyam. It is famous for the 16 rock shelters. It is a trekking spot in Chennai. Large number of tourists from all over India and many parts of the world are visiting the Gudiyam caves.

It provides a natural habitat for wild animals like wild boar and fox. Variety of birds like Drongos, Little hawks, Crow pheasant, Terns, Egrets, Painted storks and Open billed storks, Herons, Little cormorants, etc. also can be seen here.

CONSTRUCTION OF GREEN OFFICE BUILDING

Objectives

The main objectives of Green building includes,

- Efficient use of land and energy,
- Water conservation,
- Improved indoor air quality, and
- Resource conservation, primarily by using recycled & regional materials.

It is proposed to construct Green residential building at Social Forestry division, Chengalpattu at a cost of Rs.70.61 lakhs during 2016-17.