

Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary, Location, Features, Flora, Fauna

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Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary is a prominent protected area in the **Western Ghats of Maharashtra**, renowned for its dense evergreen forests, rich biodiversity, and ecological significance. It was established in **1985**, covers approximately **423 sq. km.** and forms an important part of the **Sahyadri Tiger Reserve**. It is also included in the **UNESCO World Heritage Site - Western Ghats**, making it one of India's most valuable biodiversity hotspots.

Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary Location

Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in the **Western Ghats (Sahyadri Hills)** of **Maharashtra** and extends across the districts of **Satara, Sangli, Ratnagiri, and Kolhapur**. The sanctuary surrounds the catchment area of the **Koyna Dam** and the **Shivsagar Reservoir**, making it an important ecological landscape for both wildlife conservation and water resource management.

Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary Geographical Features

Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary is characterized by rugged mountain ranges, deep valleys, dense forests, perennial streams, waterfalls, and one of Maharashtra's largest reservoirs.

- Situated at elevations ranging from **600 to over 1,100 metres above sea level**.
- Forms part of the **Western Ghats**, one of the world's eight "hottest" biodiversity hotspots.
- Receives **heavy southwest monsoon rainfall**, often exceeding **5,000 mm annually** in high-altitude regions.
- Dominated by **tropical evergreen, semi-evergreen, and moist deciduous forests**.
- The **Koyna River** flows through the sanctuary and supports its rich ecosystem.
- Encloses the vast **Shivsagar Reservoir**, created by the Koyna Hydroelectric Project.
- Features steep escarpments, rolling plateaus, narrow valleys, rocky cliffs, and dense forest canopies.
- Provides ecological connectivity with **Chandoli National Park** and nearby forest landscapes.

Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary Flora

Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary is covered with dense tropical forests of the Western Ghats, supporting a rich diversity of evergreen trees, medicinal plants, orchids, bamboo, and several endemic plant species.

- Dominated by **tropical evergreen, semi-evergreen, and moist deciduous forests**.
- Rich in valuable tree species such as **Jamun (*Syzygium cumini*), Hirda (*Terminalia chebula*), Ain, Kinjal, Anjani, Teak, and Mango**.
- Contains extensive patches of **bamboo**, shrubs, climbers, and riverine vegetation.
- Supports a wide variety of **orchids, ferns, mosses, lichens, and wildflowers**, especially during the monsoon season.
- Home to numerous **medicinal and aromatic plants** used in traditional Ayurvedic practices.
- The rich vegetation helps **prevent soil erosion, conserve water, regulate the local climate, and maintain ecological balance**.

Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary Fauna

Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary is home to a diverse range of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and insects, making it one of the richest wildlife habitats in the Western Ghats and an important part of the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve.

- **Mammals:** Bengal Tiger, Indian Leopard, Indian Gaur (Bison), Sloth Bear, Sambar Deer, Barking Deer, Mouse Deer, Wild Boar, Indian Giant Squirrel, Indian Pangolin, Leopard Cat, Hanuman Langur, and Bonnet Macaque.
- **Birds:** More than **250 bird species** have been recorded, including the **Great Hornbill, Malabar Grey Hornbill, Nilgiri Wood Pigeon, Malabar Whistling Thrush, Grey Junglefowl, Crested Serpent Eagle, Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher, and Indian Paradise Flycatcher**.
- **Reptiles:** The sanctuary shelters reptiles such as the **King Cobra, Indian Rock Python, Bamboo Pit Viper, Rat Snake, Vine Snake, Monitor Lizard, and Common Krait**.

- **Amphibians:** It supports several endemic Western Ghats amphibians, including the **Malabar Gliding Frog, Bush Frogs, Tree Frogs, and various toad species.**
- The sanctuary is an important **tiger habitat** under the **Sahyadri Tiger Reserve**, providing a secure environment for large carnivores and their prey.

Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary Conservation Efforts

Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary is protected through coordinated conservation measures by the Maharashtra Forest Department, focusing on wildlife protection, habitat restoration, and sustainable ecosystem management.

- Protected under the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**, ensuring legal safeguards for its flora and fauna.
- Managed as part of the **Sahyadri Tiger Reserve**, strengthening tiger conservation and habitat management.
- Regular **anti-poaching patrols**, surveillance, and intelligence-based monitoring to prevent illegal hunting and wildlife crimes.
- Scientific monitoring of **tiger, leopard, gaur, and prey populations** using camera traps and field surveys.
- Protection of **wildlife corridors** to maintain ecological connectivity with **Chandoli National Park** and adjoining forests.

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/koyna-wildlife-sanctuary/>

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