# Microsoft and Maharashtra Forest Department launch ecological restoration project in Tamhini Wildlife Sanctuary



A new era of sustainable tourism and ecological awareness is set to unfold in the Tamhini Wildlife Sanctuary, as Microsoft, in collaboration with the Centre for Youth Development and Activities (CYDA) and the Maharashtra Forest Department, launches an innovative project aimed at ecological restoration. Named “Biodiversity and Eco-Protection in Plus Valley, Tamhini,” this initiative marks a significant commitment to preserving the rich biodiversity of the sanctuary, which is nestled in the UNESCO-listed Western Ghats.

Launched on 8th June 2025, the project was formalised with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Tushar Chavan, Deputy Conservator of Forests for Pune Wildlife Division, and Pravin Jadhav, Executive Director of CYDA. The initiative aims to bolster conservation efforts that actively involve the local community, promoting both ecological protection and responsible tourism. Deputy Conservator Chavan noted, “Our objective is to protect Tamhini’s rich biodiversity through conservation efforts that engage and benefit the local public,” emphasising the dual focus on wildlife preservation and community involvement.

Planned developments under this initiative include eco-friendly infrastructure improvements such as solar-powered lighting, environmentally sensitive tourist amenities, and well-placed waste management facilities. The introduction of drinking water stations, public toilets, and enhanced habitat conditions through the construction of small water bodies further highlight the comprehensive nature of this endeavour. These steps aim to ensure that tourism not only supports the local economy but also safeguards the ecological integrity of the area.

Previously, the Pune Forest Department had initiated responsible tourism guidelines in 2023, resulting in the sanctuary welcoming 11,000 visitors over a six to seven month period. This successful framework included provisions for water facilities, plastic waste management, and training for locals from surrounding villages to assist visitors. These measures underline the ongoing efforts to regulate tourism and protect the sanctuary’s sensitive ecosystem.

However, Tamhini has faced challenges from unregulated tourism and illegal developments, such as farmhouse constructions and resort projects, that threaten its delicate environment. Conservationists have repeatedly called for stricter enforcement of regulations, especially following a 2015 National Green Tribunal order that mandated a construction ban within ten kilometres of the sanctuary. This legal framework highlights the need for vigilance in maintaining the sanctuary’s ecological balance in the face of rising tourist activities.

Home to an array of flora and fauna, including the Giant Squirrel and various bird species like the Malabar Grey Hornbill, Tamhini Sanctuary spans approximately 49.62 square kilometres. Its lush landscapes and rich biodiversity make it a vital area for conservationists looking to safeguard the natural heritage of the Western Ghats.

As this collaborative initiative unfolds, it not only aims to restore ecosystems but also strives to foster a culture of awareness and engagement among local stakeholders and visitors. Srichandana Nagoji, Community Affairs Lead for Microsoft India, remarked on the company's commitment to addressing global challenges like climate change through community-driven efforts, indicating a broader agenda that aligns ecological sustainability with corporate responsibility.

The future of the Tamhini Wildlife Sanctuary hinges on the success of this initiative, which aspires to harmonise ecological preservation with community development and ecotourism, thus setting a benchmark for similar efforts in biodiversity-rich regions across India.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.punekarnews.in/pune-microsoft-cyda-and-maharashtra-forest-department-join-hands-for-eco-restoration-in-tamhini-wildlife-sanctuary/), [[6]](https://www.mahaecotourism.gov.in/ecotourism/mr/node/157)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.punekarnews.in/pune-microsoft-cyda-and-maharashtra-forest-department-join-hands-for-eco-restoration-in-tamhini-wildlife-sanctuary/), [[2]](https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/pune-news/guidelines-help-streamline-tourism-in-tamhini-wildlife-reserve-101707591517837.html), [[5]](https://www.learnupsc.com/2023/08/tamhini-wildlife-sanctuary.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/pune-news/guidelines-help-streamline-tourism-in-tamhini-wildlife-reserve-101707591517837.html), [[3]](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/pune/conservationists-seek-better-fix-for-tamhini-sanctuary/articleshow/58037007.cms), [[4]](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/ngt-stays-construction-near-tamhini-wildlife-sanctuary/articleshow/49824192.cms)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.learnupsc.com/2023/08/tamhini-wildlife-sanctuary.html), [[6]](https://www.mahaecotourism.gov.in/ecotourism/mr/node/157)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.punekarnews.in/pune-microsoft-cyda-and-maharashtra-forest-department-join-hands-for-eco-restoration-in-tamhini-wildlife-sanctuary/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/pune-news/guidelines-help-streamline-tourism-in-tamhini-wildlife-reserve-101707591517837.html> - In 2023, the Pune Forest Department implemented responsible ecotourism guidelines in the Tamhini Wildlife Reserve, resulting in 11,000 visitors over six to seven months. The initiative included water facilities, plastic waste management, and training for 80 locals from five villages to assist tourists. Deputy Conservator Tushar Chavhan emphasized the importance of regulating tourism to protect the forest's sensitive ecosystem. The department also constructed wooden bridges and installed safety measures to enhance visitor safety.
3. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/pune/conservationists-seek-better-fix-for-tamhini-sanctuary/articleshow/58037007.cms> - In April 2017, environmental conservationists called for stricter vigilance to protect the Tamhini Wildlife Sanctuary and its surrounding areas. Despite a National Green Tribunal order halting development activities, concerns remained about unauthorized construction, unregulated tourism, and environmental degradation. The conservationists highlighted threats from farmhouse developments, resorts, and irresponsible visitor behavior, urging authorities to enforce regulations to preserve the sanctuary's biodiversity.
4. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/ngt-stays-construction-near-tamhini-wildlife-sanctuary/articleshow/49824192.cms> - In November 2015, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) ordered a stay on construction within 10 km of the Tamhini Wildlife Sanctuary and its eco-sensitive zone. The NGT's directive aimed to prevent development activities that could disrupt the sanctuary's sensitive ecosystem, highlighting the importance of maintaining a buffer zone to protect the sanctuary's biodiversity.
5. <https://www.learnupsc.com/2023/08/tamhini-wildlife-sanctuary.html> - Established in 2013, the Tamhini Wildlife Sanctuary spans approximately 49.62 square kilometers in the Western Ghats. The sanctuary is home to diverse flora, including species like Jamun, Golden Shower Tree, and Indian Gooseberry. It also supports various wildlife species, such as the Giant Squirrel, Leopard, Malabar Grey Hornbill, and Indian Cobra, making it a significant biodiversity hotspot.
6. <https://www.mahaecotourism.gov.in/ecotourism/mr/node/157> - The Maharashtra Ecotourism Development Board provides information about the Tamhini Wildlife Sanctuary, highlighting its role in promoting ecotourism and conservation efforts in the region. The sanctuary's rich biodiversity and scenic landscapes make it a key destination for nature enthusiasts and conservationists.
7. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/varanasi/eco-tourism-to-conserve-forests-wildlife/articleshow/54688353.cms> - In October 2016, the Uttar Pradesh Department of Tourism collaborated with the Forest Department to promote ecotourism aimed at conserving forests and wildlife. The initiative involved improving amenities in national parks and wildlife sanctuaries to attract visitors, thereby generating revenue for conservation programs and supporting local communities.