



The Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary, Western Ghats, India

by Suprabha Seshan, Founder and Director

Since its inception in 1981, the Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary has been promoting the preservation of rainforests in the Western Ghats, through a combination of on and off site strategies. Through 2007 and 2008 the sanctuary has continued its work in conservation and education. The successful propagation of hundreds of native plant species at the Sanctuary has now made it possible to envisage integrated restoration strategies for degraded parts of the Western Ghats. A large number of people continue to visit the garden and educational programmes, organised by the Trust, have become increasingly popular with schools.

One of the sanctuary's more recent projects, supported by Rainforest Concern, is the Rapid Floristic Survey covering the southern-forested districts of Maharashtra, Uttara Kannada, Coorg, Nilgiris and Wayanad. As well as monitoring the growth and spread of Orchidaceae, Balsaminaceae and Pterophytes the project continues to foster the ongoing cultivation and propagation of approx 1,600 native rainforest species. In addition to this Rainforest Concern has also provided funding for the purchase and replanting of an old coffee plantation.



Planting epiphytes on trees

Various areas of the Sanctuary have been landscaped to create microhabitats for those plant species that are particularly vulnerable and difficult to cultivate. This included the construction of two greenhouses, one for seed and seedling storage, the other for ground orchids and impatiens. And together with the Tamil Nadu Forest Department we are continuing to restore the wattle infested areas of the Mukur-



Restoration of hillsides ensures clean and healthy streams

thi National Park.

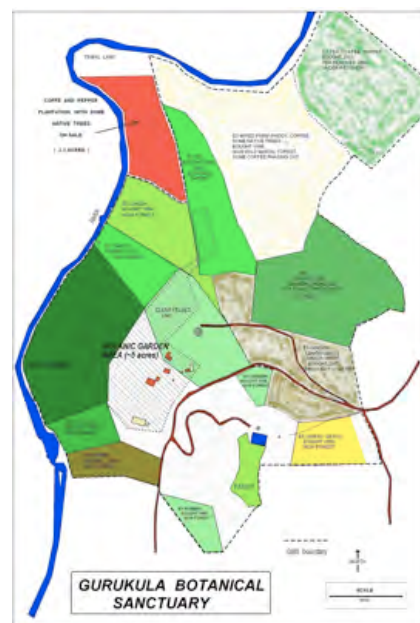
Together with the Coorg Foundation and the Karnataka Forest Department, advisory visits have been made to the Talakavery Tapovana Project. The aim of the project has been to restore the degraded hillsides around the temple site with natural vegetation, an area critical to the wellbeing of the headwaters of the Kaveri River. In addition to this we are continuing to support several ornithological studies, one of which include the monitoring and breeding patterns of resident birds.

The School in the Forest

Between 2000 and 3000 people, 80% of which have come from northern rural Kerala, have benefited from guided tours and instruction on plant biodiversity and conservation. Slide shows were given in local schools together with the screening of wildlife documentaries for local villages. We are also pleased to announce that we have completed the third year of our Landscapes and Lifeskills Course, a six-month residential internship. Ten local women were trained in horticulture and conservation.

The Sanctuary was represented at the Planet Diversity Congress in Bonn where Suprabha gave a keynote speech on the wild basis of all life. We have also participated in National Assessment of Critically Endangered Plants with the Botanical Survey of India and the Ministry

of Environment and Forests, in Coimbatore, India. We are very grateful to Rainforest Concern for critical support in our ongoing work. Our other supporters have been the Whitley Fund for Nature, Mrs. Rohini Nilekani, and the "Friends of the Sanctuary"



Rainforest Concern funded the purchase of red area