

# Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Mumbai

A case for protecting an unique urban wilderness.

--- Shardul S. Bajikar

Editor: Natural History

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# Welcome to the financial capital of India – Mumbai!



Formerly called Bombay, this small island of just 437 sq.km. contributes more than 6% of India's GDP



The Bombay Stock Exchange is amongst the biggest in the world with a market capital of 1.6 trillion USD!



4<sup>th</sup> most populated city of the world, Mumbai houses a population of >12 million with population densities as high as 20,000 people per sq.km.



But this city is really WILD at heart! And ~20% of its land area is the protected wilderness area called – Sanjay Gandhi National Park.



Night life here can get really WILD!



So why is it important that Mumbai continues to protect its last remaining wilderness areas?







# The growing population had its growing water needs.



Map Not To Scale

Mumbai region in 1893

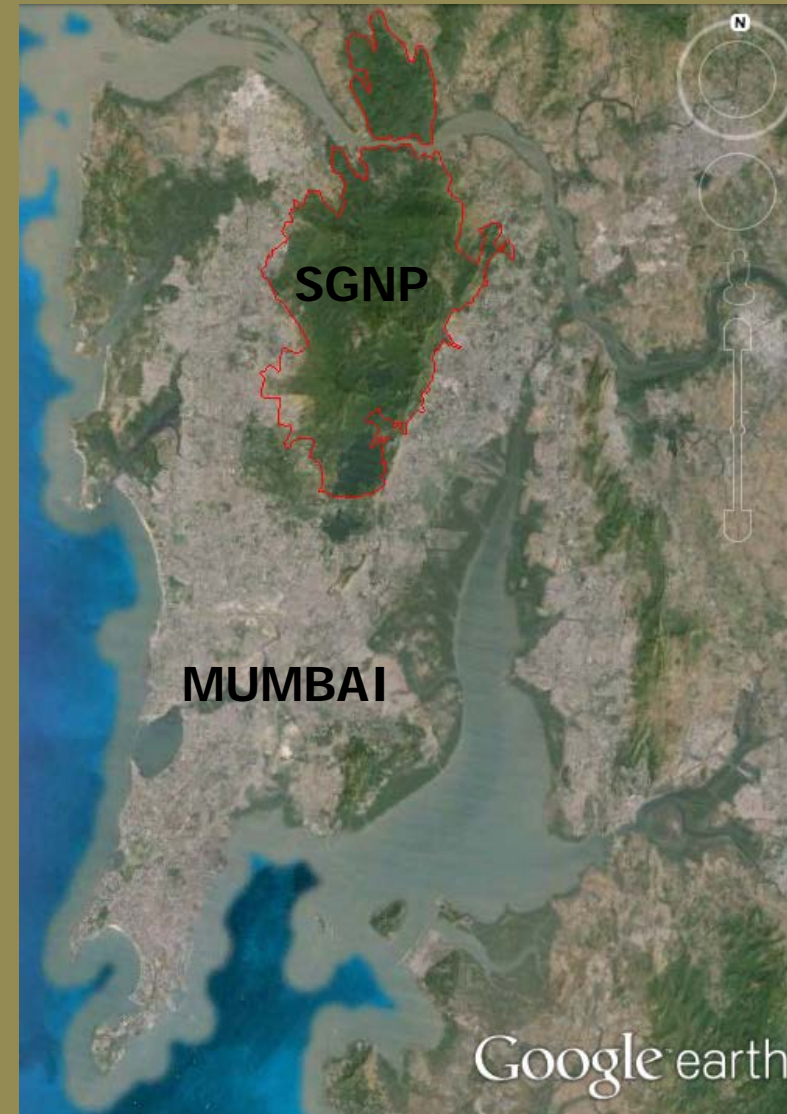
- The municipal corporation of Mumbai commissioned Vihar dam in 1860.
- In addition, the Tulsi lake was also created in 1868.
- The forested hills were a boon to Mumbai's water security and recognising this, the administration declared the 2 lakes and their immediate catchments were protected.
- Later more area around these lakes was acquired and official forests around them as inviolate Protected Areas in 1890's under the Indian Forest Protection Act, 1929.

# Action to protect forests around Mumbai's lakes started from 1900's.

- It started with a protected area of about 10 sq.km. All of this was surrounding the lakes.

Year	Area added
1900	10 sq.km.
1947	21 sq.km.
1950	20.2 sq.km.
1968	47 sq.km.
1975	25 sq.km.

- After settling some legal & land issues, the government of India issued final notification reserving 103.09 sq.km. as the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP).

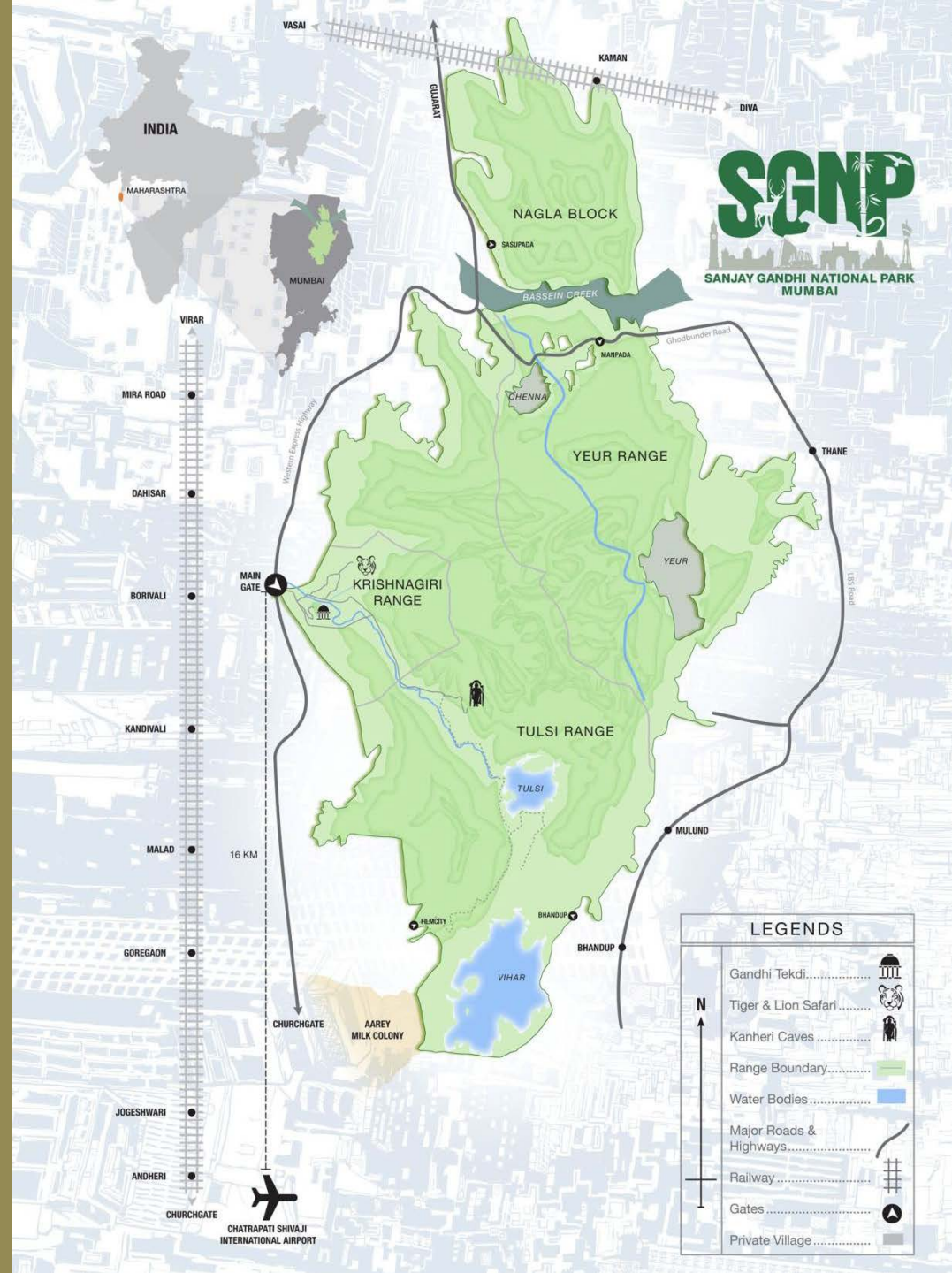


# The Sanjay Gandhi National Park

- 103 sq.km. of unique wilderness located at the edge of a global mega-diversity hotspot of Western Ghats.



- But surrounded by an ever expanding city from almost all sides!



A mixed deciduous forest the park boasts of over 1300 species of plants.

- During 4 months of monsoons SGNP receives about 2000 mm of annual rainfall.
- This gives rise to luxurious vegetation growth with a healthy mix of trees, shrubs, bushes undergrowth etc.



Image: Anish Andheria

**Spiral ginger *Cheilocostus speciosus***



Image: Anish Andheria

**Flytrap flower *Ceropegia vincaefolia***

Mumbai city alone harbours >165 species of butterflies.

**Gaudy Baron** *Euthalia lubentina*



Image: Yuwaraj Gurjar

With a wingspan of ~26 centimeters the Atlas moth is arguably the largest moth in the world. Yes, it also resides in Mumbai!

*Attacus taprobanis*



Image: Shardul Bajkar



# New Species Discovery at SGNP

3 new species of spiders and 1 new species of scorpion has been described from SGNP since 2010.

*Idiops rubrolimbatus*



Image: Rajesh Sanap

*Lychas aryensis*



Image: Zeeshan Mirza

# Herpetofauna @SGNP:

14 sp. of Amphibians; 62 sp. of Reptiles (38 sp. of snakes)



**Bamboo pit viper**  
*Trimeresurus gramineus*

**Kollegal Ground Gecko**  
*Geckoella collegalensis*



**Fungoid frog** *Hylarana malabarica*



Image: Anish Andheria

With more than 274 species of birds found here, SGNP is a haven for bird watchers.

**Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher *Ceyx erithaca***



Image: Jayesh Minde

With over 35 species of mammals SGNP is a paradise for naturalists and nature lovers alike.



**Spotted Deer / Chital *Axis axis***

Image: Amit Panariya

## Nature seeks every opportunity to surprise us!



- In the year 2003, tiger movement was recorded along the Northern edges of SGNP.
- This news was much to surprise and bewilderment for the wildlife and conservation community of India as tigers were thought to be all gone from the vicinity of Mumbai city.
- But thanks to the sparse corridor connectivity that the park enjoys the big cats did manage to find their way back into Mumbai. Albeit temporarily.

# Corridor Connectivity for SGNP

- In April 2009, a leopard was fell into a well in a village about 100 km away from SGNP.
- Wildlife biologist Vidya Athreya & her team rescued it, fitted it with a radio-collar before releasing in vicinity. They named the animal 'Ajoba' meaning old man.
- After his release Ajoba undertook a journey of 120 km over 3 weeks and found himself in SGNP!
- Ajoba was found dead, run over by a vehicle on a highway that cuts through SGNP.



## Green Keelback (*Macropisthodon plumbicolor*)



A thriving ecosystem.

- With its rich biodiversity, there is very little doubt that forest is still managing to hold on against the pressure of an ever expanding city.
- The event of tiger's reappearance and the legendary journey of Ajoba shows us that SGNP is also connected to other wildlife habitats near and far.

# But for how long can SGNP hold on?

Even today, about 30,000 families are encroaching upon SGNP.







## Man-animal conflict around SGNP is at alarming proportions.

- Since 2002, more than 110 incidences of leopard attacks on humans have been recorded with >20 human casualties.
- These attacks are largely restricted to the periphery of SGNP.
- Leopards are randomly trapped and animals end up languishing in captivity for the rest of their life.
- Resettling of encroachers & protecting green areas around SGNP as ecological buffers is very crucial.

Protecting the forests of Sanjay Gandhi National Park is only in the best interest of securing Mumbai's drinking water supply.



Image: Anish Andheria

The forests' of SGNP played a vital role in controlling the massive cloud burst event of 26<sup>th</sup> July 2005, in which 800 people lost their lives and economic losses are pegged at USD 100 million!



SGNP offers unparalleled opportunities for Mumbaikars in nature education & outdoor recreation.



Trying to win new constituencies using diverse mediums.

**Sanjay Gandhi National Park - SGNP**  
National park · Outdoor recreation · Active life

5,636 likes  
2,797 visits

What have you been up to?

**Sanjay Gandhi National Park - SGNP** changed their cover photo.  
Posted by Shardul Bajikar [?] · 23 hours ago · Edited

**A miracle forest!**  
As the World Parks Congress convenes today in Sydney, Australia, we at SGNP are very happy of the fact that SGNP is being highlighted at this decennial conservation event. And why not, SGNP is the only protected area (with large carnivores) in the world which is enveloped by a huge and growing metropolis.

While the world is watching SGNP with admiration and awe, it is up to us here in Mumbai city and India to protect and preserve SGNP for posterity.

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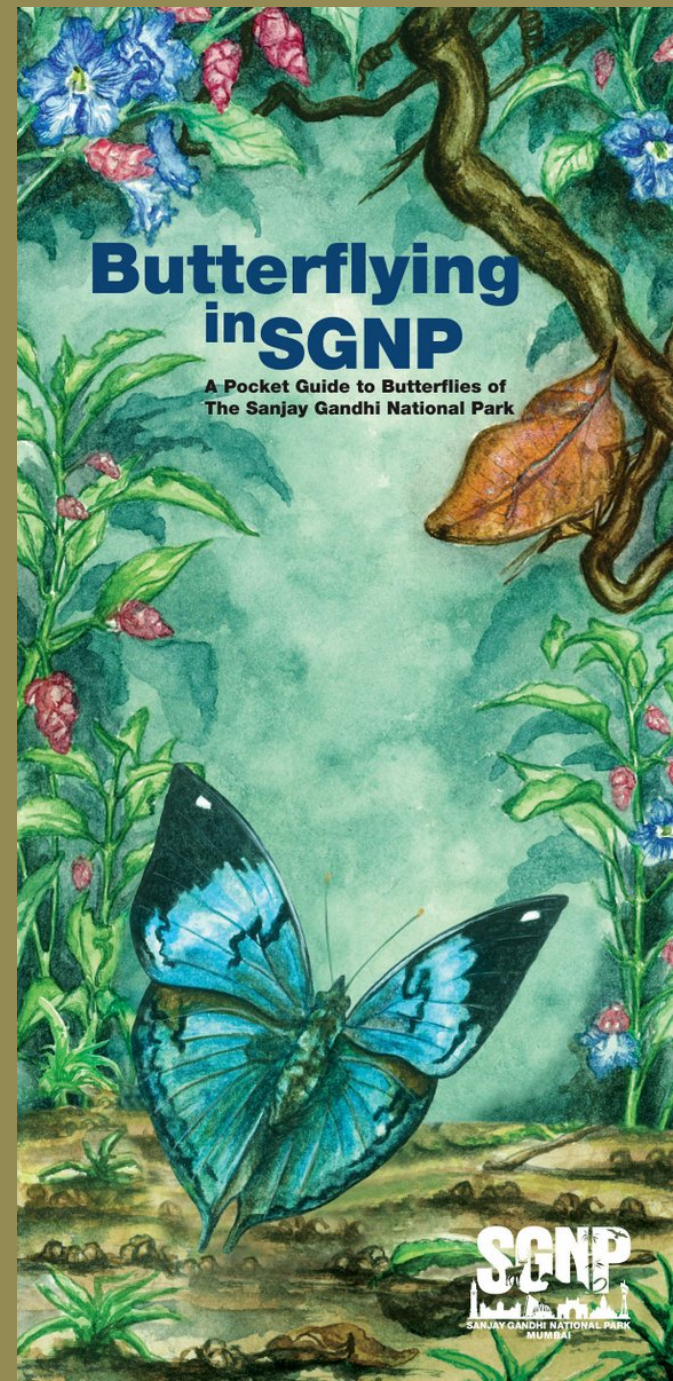
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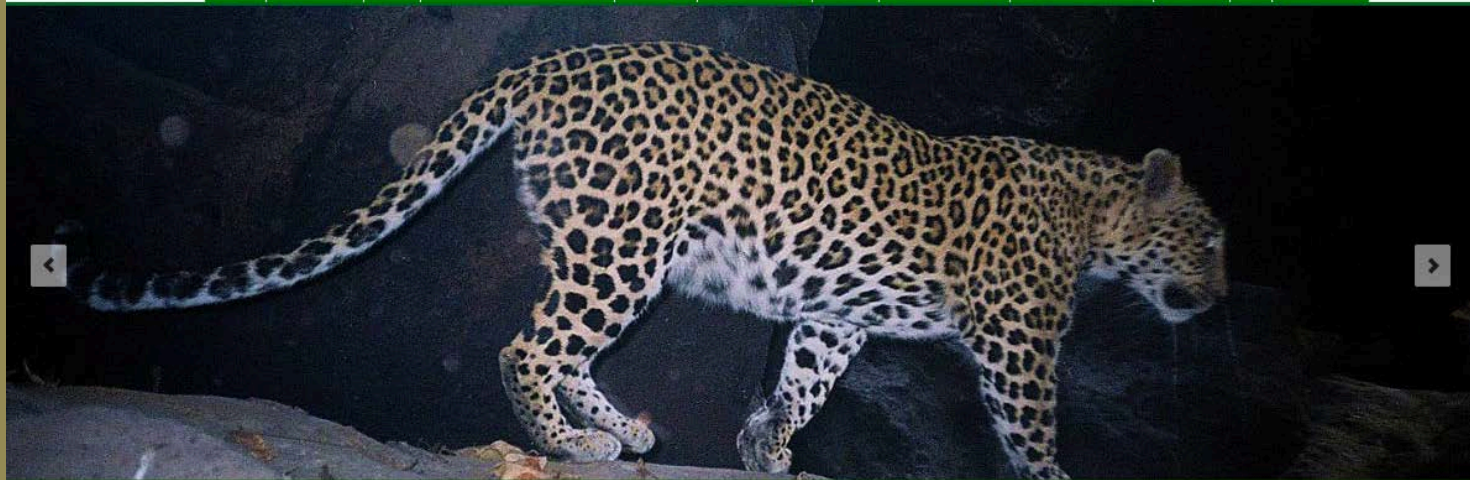
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Sanjay Gandhi National Park  
This is the official page of Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) - a unique protected forest...

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An exceptional wilderness, The Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) is spread over 103 Sq. Km. and is wedged between the suburbs of Mumbai and Thane. IMAGE: MFSGNP

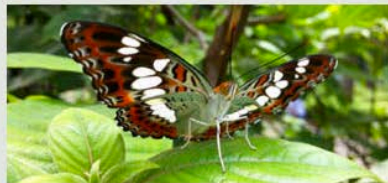
## History Of SGNP



Present-day SGNP has an interesting history and comprises of a mixture of State reserve Lands. It all started with protecting the watersheds of the 19th century. From 1937 till date various pockets of forested land were acquired to form 103.8 Sq.Km. of SGNP.

[More...](#)

## Biodiversity



Part of the Western Ghats Biodiversity complex, SGNP forms roughly 20 per cent of Mumbai's geographical area . SGNP is home to more than 274 species of birds, 35 species of mammals, 150 species of butterflies, and 1300 species of plants.

[More...](#)

## Social Media



Yesterday at 5:09pm

**A miracle forest!**  
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The SGNP website aims to make the park management more accessible to the public.



The top most need of the hour is to form numerous watch dog groups and pressure groups to pressurize our policy makers to protect SGNP.

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[www.saevus.in](http://www.saevus.in)

Email: [shardulbajikar@gmail.com](mailto:shardulbajikar@gmail.com)

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