

## Biodiversity in my Bengaluru Backyard

<b>Title</b>	Biodiversity In My Bengaluru Backyard
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<b>Grade (you must be grade 9-12)</b>	11
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### Report copy

Nestled on the outskirts of Bengaluru, the community of Good Earth Malhar, where I live, is teeming with the calls and chirps of birds, insects and animals. Wildlife is found in every corner of the community. My backyard is bustling with the songs of birds like the Red-whiskered Bulbul, Indian White-eye, Common Tailorbird, Ashy Prinia, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Common Myna, and different species of Sunbirds.

According to ebird.org, the hotspot of Good Earth Malhar is currently home to over 130 species of birds. From India's smallest bird; the Pale-billed Flowerpecker and the colourful Indian Pitta, to the relatively large Red-naped Ibis, Peacock, Black Kite, Brahminy Kite, Booted Eagle and many more. The most commonly found birds are the Red-whiskered Bulbul and Sunbirds. During the monsoon season, a nearby lake fills up attracting hundreds of birds like the Indian Pond Heron, the Indian Spot-billed Duck, and the White-breasted Waterhen.

From August to January, one can also spot the bright red Red Avadavat in their breeding plumage. During this time, many of the trees across the community are filled with hundreds of nests of the Baya Weaver. Indian Grey Hornbills have also been spotted. Recently, we were lucky enough to have a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher couple nest in the garden of one of our neighbours!! One cannot go far without hearing the sweet calls and sounds of the many birds.

Malhar is also home to all the species of the “Big Four” snakes of India; Spectacled Cobra, Russel’s Viper, Common Krait, and Saw Scaled Viper (this has been spotted only once nearby a few years ago) There are around 20 species of reptiles, like the Bronze Mabuya, Asian Gecko, Rat Snake, Spectacled Cobra, etc. The Indian Rat Snake is the most common and spotted almost every other day. If you’re really lucky, you can spot snakes like the Annamalai Wolf Snake, Common Trinket Snake and Shieldtail, Green Vine Snake or the Common Krait. Sometimes, these snakes can also be found inside of houses! If you keep your eyes peeled, you are sure to spot a snake or a reptile.

Observations by residents of Malhar, including myself, on iNaturalist.org show around 15 species of amphibians, like the Bengaluru Burrowing Frog and the Marbled Balloon Frog. Mammals also include the Indian Flying Fox, Asian Palm Civet and the Indian Hare. On one occasion, there were a family of Civet Cats, who had made the electrical room their home for a while. Wild elephants have been spotted on two separate occasions nearby!! There was also a sighting of a lone Indian Dhol, which in most probability, strayed from the nearby BM Kaval Forest. Over 25 species of arachnids crawl around the area. The Flower Crab Spider, Two-tailed spider and Giant Forest scorpion are just a few of what is found. 200 species of insects dot the area in every nook and corner; from ants, beetles, wasps, bees and ladybirds, to large moths, grasshoppers, butterflies and dragonflies. Slugs and the invasive African Snail are also found commonly across.

Over 100 species of plants and flowers are sprawled across providing colour and life to the landscape. Flowers of all hues like the African Tulip Tree, Spanish Needle, Egyptian Star-Cluster, Box Leaved Barleria and the Camel Bush Flower can be found everywhere. Indian Elm Tree, Coconut Tree, Pongamia Tree, Gulmohar, Singapore Cherry, Copperpods, Rain trees are also found commonly.

Once the sun bids adieu, Malhar is given a whole new lease of life. Insects come out of their hiding spots, snakes creep out of their holes and nocturnal birds fly out of their homes in trees. The chirps of various species of mantis’, grasshoppers and cicadas can be heard loud and clear throughout the night. More often than not, Spotted Owlet and Red-Wattled Lapwing screeches can be heard echoing through the night. If one listens carefully in the cacophony of the night, one can hear the strained call of the Indian Scops Owls.

At night, the checkered keelback is commonly found near water bodies, and occasionally the Common Krait and Russel's Viper can be found among leaf litter along the side of the road, or if you're really lucky, one of those can also be found near your doorstep. During monsoon, when the lake nearby fills up, the croaks of thousand of frogs can almost be deafening. The Sri Lankan Painted Frog, Sri Lankan Bullfrog, Bengaluru Burrowing Frog and the Asian Common Toad can be found.

I am fortunate enough to live in a community with like-minded people who respect, cherish, value and care about the immense biodiversity in and around our community. In the concrete jungle that Bengaluru has become, it is gratifying to know that there are still areas that protect and cherish the wild world around us.





**Additional Comments**

All the images submitted have been taken by me.

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Accepted