

## Thane housing complex geo-tags its trees, conducts green audit

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Left: A census worker geo-tags a tree; the complex has a lush green cover over nearly 16 acres— Photos: Special Arrangement

Setting an example for housing societies in Mumbai and its satellite suburbs, Eden Woods, one of the leafiest housing colonies in Thane's Vasant Vihar, has initiated a green audit which will include a census of its flora and fauna and geo-tagging of trees to map, preserve, and enhance its rich natural environment in a scientific way.

TN Raghunatha, secretary, Federation of Eden Woods Co-operative Housing Societies, said, "We are a 25-year-old complex constructed on approximately 15 to 16 acres of land. We embarked on this about a year-and-a-half ago when the need arose to prune some trees. We decided to protect the existing greenery and build further on it. The central theme of our green policy is 'live in the green'."

The residents brought in expert Dr Pramod Salaskar, who has been involved in the Powai conservation project and runs Sunita Enviro, a non-profit centre for environment promotion. "It is important to know our environment, and see what can be naturally sustainable and how we can create a more dense and

better managed environment. We found a qualified and capable person in Dr Salaskar, who is expected to submit his report with basic recommendations next month," Mr Kotian said.

With active help from residents like Mala Biswas, who has a background in botany, Dr Salaskar and his team started the tree census in July 2015 and mapped nearly 450 trees, over 25 species of birds and butterflies. With GPS equipment, the trees were geo-tagged for their exact location inside the complex.

Dr Salaskar, who carried out a similar census at the Hiranandani complexes in Powai and Manpada, Thane, said, "Hardly any society does this, but I was pleasantly surprised to see highly-qualified and aware residents in Eden Woods. The complex has a mango orchard and some trees are nearly 150 years old. Our census found varieties of mango, fishtail palm, jacaranda, custard apple, guava, jambhul, Indian cork tree, African tulip, teak, tamarind, jackfruit, banyan, neem among others. We are still compiling the data."

He added that his team found over 25 species of birds including sunbirds, green bee-eaters, red-vented bulbuls, coppersmith barbets or tambat, red bulbul, wagtail, Indian robin or chirak, white-throated kingfisher or khandya, black drongo or kotwal to name a few. "Birds and butterflies nest on specific trees and plants, and that's why indigenous trees need to be preserved," Dr Salaskar said.

"Many societies opt for exotic trees, which often damage soil quality. It is important that indigenous plants and trees are nurtured to sustain the natural food chain," said Dr Salaskar.

Source:

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/mumbai/news/thane-housing-complex-geotags-its-trees-conducts-green-audit/article8191395.ece>