



‘Lantana elephants’ to the rescue

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Sculptures made with invasive plant draw attention to the threats pachyderms face

- Conservationists have come up with a unique way to highlight a threat to the Asian elephant in the Nilgiris: make elephant sculptures out of the threatening species and take them around as art exhibits.
- The threat, in this case, is the invasive weed Lantana camara, which has been reducing the elephants’ fodder base in the region.
- For some time now, local tribal artisans have been busy constructing ‘lantana elephants’, which weigh about 300 kg and are eight feet tall.

Three-fold purpose

- The sculptures are handmade from lantana vines, which have taken over large swathes of the elephant’s fragmented habitat.
- The elephants are sculpted by tribal artisans working for the Shola Trust, a non-profit involved in nature conservation in the Nilgiris.
- First, they will help raise awareness about the spread of Lantana camara in the Nilgiris, and the threat this weed poses to local elephant population.
- Second, it provides livelihoods to indigenous communities, and finally, the sale of the lantana elephants can help raise funds for conservation of the Asian elephant

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