

# Rare hill palm found in Kollam

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Unlike its cousin the areca nut palm, the hill areca *Bentinckia condapanna* is a rare sight.

Now, researchers have spotted a population of the threatened wild palms in an abandoned tea plantation in Kollam district.

According to a recent study in the *Journal of Threatened Taxa* which publishes scientific articles to promote conservation, M. Divin Muresh of Malappuram's MES Mampad College and his colleague Ajith Ashokan discovered 76 adult palms and 66 seedlings of the hill areca near a road on the Arundel-Priya estate near Thenmala.

Although the palm is reported to grow in high elevations (between 1,000 and 2,000 metres above mean sea level) in the Western



Palms of the hill areca *Bentinckia condapanna* from the Arundel-Priya estate near Thenmala.

Ghats, the new population has been reported from a lower altitude of around 600 metres. The team also noticed birds (including the Malabar grey hornbill and Malabar barbet) and mammals (bats and bonnet macaques) feeding on the bright red fruits of the palm.

The researchers spotted the palms growing on a slanting rock along the Kaz-

huthurutty-Arundel-Achencoil road which has been proposed for widening.

According to them, the discovery could add to the importance of this site, which, along with five other estates in the area, has been proposed to form a potential wildlife corridor along the Aryankavu pass for the use of large fauna, including elephant and tigers.