



**At home:** Just chilling. PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

# Who moved my tree?

**They brought the tree down. I watched in sadness as the squirrel was left homeless. But, that moment was decisive. I decided to do something.**

**O**ne summer, many years ago, while I was living in the garden city of Pune, I lay in bed, unwell. Lying in bed, I watched a large neem tree teeming with activity. Birds like orioles, flycatchers, and magpie robins were frequent visitors to the tree. Another cute resident on the neem tree was the palm squirrel; common in peninsular India. As I lay in bed, I enjoyed watching these creatures go about their daily tasks. Their activities on the tree made me get well quicker!

Then one day, I saw to my dismay that the tree was being chopped down to widen the road in the neighbouring society. I had watched the squirrel build its nest all summer, and it was with

sadness I watched as the tree was slowly chopped down. I wondered what happened to the squirrel nesting in the tree.

The loss of the squirrel's nest made me sad. After much thought, I decided to do something about this. The loss of the tree led me to find out that in India trees, even the ones planted by us in our homes, need permission before they are chopped.

### Time to act

Over the next few years, I got involved in a programme called Pune Tree Watch, where citizens engaged with the Garden Department, to reduce tree felling in the rapidly developing city of Pune. We looked to

balance development with the green needs of the city. We sought solutions like tree transplantation, alternate routes for roads or different designs for buildings, sewage and pipelines to save trees. In two to three years, we were able to save many trees, and create awareness about the laws relating to tree felling among citizens.

In 2008, I shifted to Dehradun, where I continued my work to save urban biodiversity. We worked with citizens, institutions and the municipal and forest departments to save green cover in Dehradun. Over the last few years, we have successfully transplanted some trees, and saved many of them from being felled, too.

My ultimate reward in this line of work came when a tree in the middle of Dehradun city was being cut down. I watched as a squirrel ran down the tree that the municipality was chopping, and run up the one we had saved. It had lost a home, but found a new one. All the work I had done in the last decade seemed worthwhile.

It took a squirrel and a tree to move me from being aware and feeling sad, to action. All of us need to act to save nature.

So, what will be your "squirrel" moment?

*Conservation and Nature is a series brought to you by Kalpavriksh Environmental Action group ([www.kalpavriksh.org](http://www.kalpavriksh.org))*

 **Do your bit**

**Another cute resident on the neem tree was the palm squirrel. He was building his nest.**



Anchal Sondhi