



Souvenir

2025





**rd NATIONAL
CONFERENCE
ON LESSER-KNOWN
SPECIES OF MP**

17&18th January, 2025
BHOPAL

THEME 2025

Day-1

Current Status, Conservation Efforts
and Management Challenges of
Lesser Known and Endangered Species
of Madhya Pradesh

Day-2

Wetlands: Their Ecosystem
Services and The Communities-
Torch Bearers of Conservation



SNHC India with registered name Society of Nature Healers, Conservators and Local Tourism Development is a Non-Profit Organization (NGO) founded in Year 2019 in capital city of MP i.e. Bhopal with a vision of healing (restoring) Mother Nature in natural and effective ways and conserving its beauty, the beautiful species of birds, animals, stunning and wide varieties of plants including conservation and promotion of Heritage & Culture which is handed over to us from our ancestors.

Through our publication i.e. **SNHC Journal** – A Quarterly English magazine of central India on sensitising people for Nature, we are reaching Educational institutions at National Level, all forest divisions of India, libraries of different Govt. departments, NGO's and people in nature conservation etc. We have been publishing this since February 2020 and have received very good responses and commendations from all over India and some parts of the world as well. We have 38500+ E - distributions (Including Email & What's App) & 2500+ Hard Copies distributions all over India and abroad which is increasing per volume.

With the vision of Nature Conservation (wildlife conservation preferably) and Sensitization to youth as well as people in action i.e. in the field we started organizing a 2-day National conference on "Lesser known species of MP, to plan and highlight conservation efforts and management challenges of those species. The first Conference was organized in **Jan 2023** followed by the second in **Jan 2024**.

Our NGO - **SNHC India** through this annual conference is basically focusing on Nature Conservation & Restoration, Lesser Known /Endangered Species Conservation, Forestry, Wetlands, Organic Farming, Environment Degradation, Climate change, Community Development, Green Initiatives and works, Sustainable Living, Wildlife and Ecosystems like lakes, ponds, rivers etc.

To push the conservation efforts we are coming up with the 3rd edition of the conference Dated **17-18 & 19th of January 2025** which will help in consistent planning for conservation of lesser known species of MP and in reviewing ongoing research & conservation action plans for them.



India being a party to Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) enacted Biological Diversity Act in 2002. A three tier structure has been established for implementation of Biological Diversity Act, 2002 with National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) at the apex, State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs) at provincial level and Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) at the local body level. As per the provisions of BD Act, 2002, Madhya Pradesh State Biodiversity Board was constituted on 11th April, 2005. The objectives of the Board are Conservation of biodiversity, Sustainable use of its components and Equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of biological resources and associated traditional knowledge.

Madhya Pradesh State Biodiversity Board has an advisory role in promoting Biodiversity concerns amongst various stakeholders. One of the focus areas of the Board includes promotion of research & documentation on various facets of biodiversity and advocating policy in gap areas. The lesser-known faunal species is one such gap area which needs focus and action. MPSBB has supported research projects on some important and lesser-known faunal species like Caracal, Forest Owlet, Lesser florican, Vultures, Red-Crowned Roofed Turtle(Batagur Kachuga), Mahseer, Malabar Pied Hornbill and four horned antelope to improve the understanding of these species.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

SNHC India started organizing a 2 day National Conference on "**Lesser known species of Madhya Pradesh**" with the vision of Wildlife Conservation and sensitisation to youth as well as people in conservation, to plan and highlight conservation efforts and management challenges of Lesser Known species. Lesser known as in, species with very low distribution, less researched, rapid population decline, data deficient and Endangered.

To fill this conservation gap the first conference was organised in **Jan 2023** followed by the 2nd in **Jan 2024** with expected outcome being, to come up with better conservation action plans and management strategies for these species through utilization of available research data focusing on their current status, conservation challenges and way forward that is recommendations from the researchers and scientists for the concerned departments, wildlife institutes and NGO's to execute on the field and if data is deficient or unavailable in any of these species then it must be planned and detailed research is to be done to analyse the issues as without that nothing can be figured out.

In 2 days of both the conferences, about 15 technical sessions were held in which speakers shared their rich experience and hard work in the field and threw light on different aspects of Biology to Ecology, from conservation challenges to conservation strategies. People active in the field of nature conservation came together under one roof to plan and act for the conservation of these lesser-known species of Madhya Pradesh.

SNHC India is trying to fill the gap and strengthen the conservation community of Central India by highlighting very important and much needed topic of lesser-known species that are equally important as flagship species of Madhya Pradesh. We in Collaboration with **MP State Biodiversity Board** are coming up with the 3rd edition of the conference to push the conservation efforts & Management plans of lesser known Faunal species of MP.

For a broader and more scientific approach after conducting our 3rd Conference in Jan 2025 we will move to Landscape conservation resulting in the addition of few more states and a lot more diverse lesser-known species seeking attention there. The conference will then be titled as "**National Conference on Lesser-Known Species of Central Indian Landscape**" which will be a pivotal step in strengthening the conservation community of Central India.



ABOUT MPSBB

Madhya Pradesh State Biodiversity Board has been constituted by the State Government as per the provisions of Biological Diversity Act, 2002 notified by the Government of India. Objectives of the Board being Conservation of biodiversity, Sustainable use of its components and Equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of biological resources and associated traditional knowledge.

Board has an advisory role in promoting biodiversity concerns among various stakeholders. One of the focus areas of the board includes promotion of research and advocacy of policy in gap areas. The lesser known faunal species is one such gap area which needs focus and action.

OUTCOME

- To review the available research data of lesser-known species of Madhya Pradesh.
- To give a platform to the National experts of these species.
- To highlight the conservation efforts & Management Challenges for these species.
- To highlight Lesser-Known Faunal diversity of Madhya Pradesh in National scenario.
- To promote more and more research and study of Lesser-Known Species.
- To propose effective conservation action plans and management strategies for these species.

SCHEDULE

DAY-1 (17th January, 2025)

Time	Topics/Details and Speakers
09:15-10:00	Registration
10.00-10.45	INAUGURATION By Chairperson, NBA, Chennai (TBC) or Addl. Director General of Forest (TBC), MOEF & CC, New Delhi
10:00-10:10	Introduction & Welcome of guests by Organizers
10:10-10:15	LIGHTING OF LAMP
10:15-10:45	Introductory remarks by the Guests, including the Keynote address by Mr. Subhnanjan Sen, PCCF Wildlife & Chief Wildlife Warden, MP
10:45-11:00	Identification and conservation of Lesser Known Species by Dr Anish Andheria, President, Wildlife Conservation Trust, Mumbai, MH
11:00-11:10	Memento distribution to dignitaries and Group Photo
11:10-11:40	Tea Break
	TECHNICAL SESSION -1
11:40-12:20	Conducting small carnivore research using camera traps: recommended best practices - by Mr. Devcharan Jathanna, PhD, Sr. Scientist & Programme Head: Carnivore Conservation Ecology WCS- India <i>Chaired By: Dr Suhas Kumar, IFS (Retd), Former PCCF, MP</i>
12:20-13:00	Stripes in the shadows- The story of Striped hyena - by Dr. I.P. Bopanna, Landscape Coordinator, WWF- INDIA <i>Chaired By: R Srinivasa Murthy, IFS (Retd), Ex. Member Secretary, MPSBB</i>
13:00-13:40	Nesting Ecology of Malabar Pied Hornbill in Pench Tiger Reserve, MP - by Dr. Gajanan Wagh, Professor, Dept. of Zoology, SSS College, Amravati MH & Member of IUCN Asia Hornbill Specialist Group <i>Chaired By: Mr Ajay Gadikar, Member of the IUCN-Species Commission for Hornbills</i>
13:40-14:30	Lunch Break
	TECHNICAL SESSION -2
14:30-15:10	Otter Ecology and Hydrology: Exploring the vital connection between Eurasian otters and hydrology in the Satpura landscape by Mr. Prasad Gaidhani, Wildlife Ecologist, WCT, Mumbai <i>Chaired By: Mr Jasbir Singh Chauhan, IFS (Retd), Former PCCF, MP</i>
15:10-15:50	Moths and Citizen science by Dr. V. Shubhalaxmi Reddy Founder & Managing Trustee, iNaturewatch Foundation, Mumbai Member of IUCN Commission on Education and Communication <i>Chaired By: Mr. K Raman, IFS (Retd), Former APCCF, MP</i>
15:50-16:30	Enter the Dragon: Understanding Odonates (Dragonflies & Damselflies) of Central India - by Dr. Pankaj Koparde, PhD Assistant Professor, Evolutionary Ecologist Department of Environmental Studies, MIT World Peace University, Pune, Maharashtra <i>Chaired By: Mr. Aseem Shrivastava, IFS, PCCF & HOFF, MP</i>
16:30-17:20	A panel discussion on "Wildlife Outside Protected Area's" moderated by Dr. Debadityo Sinha, Lead- Climate & Ecosystems at Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy in conversation with: Dr. Suhas Kumar, IFS (Retd), Former PCCF, MP R Srinivasa Murthy, IFS (Retd), Ex. Member Secretary, MPSBB Dr. Anish Andheria, President, Wildlife Conservation Trust, Mumbai, MH Dr. Yogesh Dubey, Professor, IIFM Bhopal Ms. Parveen Sheikh, Scientist-C, Conservation Department, BNHS Mumbai
	Hi Tea

SCHEDULE

DAY-2 (18th January, 2025)

Time	Topics/Details and Speakers
09:15-10:00	Registration
	TECHNICAL SESSION - 1
10:00-10:40	Wetlands in MP, their status and Ecosystem Services including the Ramsar Sites by Mr. Lokendra Thakkar , Chief Scientific Officer, EPCO Bhopal <i>Chaired By: R. Srinivasa Murthy, IFS (Retd), Former Member Secretary, MPSBB</i>
10:40-11:20	Multi stakeholder action for wetland conservation: A case study from period urban Bengaluru - by Dr. Amit Dubey , Head Wetlands, WWF-India <i>Chaired By: Mr Saurabh Popli, Associate Professor, SPA Bhopal</i>
11:20 -11:50	Tea Break
	TECHNICAL SESSION -2
11:50-12:30	Engaging Communities in Wetland Conservation: Successes & Insights by - Mr. Samir Kumar Sinha , Ph.D., Joint Director and Chief Ecologist at Wildlife Trust of India <i>Chaired By: Mr Praveen Chandra Dubey, IFS (Retd), Former PCCF, MP</i>
12:30-13:10	The dwindling waterfowl counts at the Ramsar sites of Indore - by Mr. Ajay Gadikar , Joint Secretary, TNV Indore, Member of the IUCN-Species Commission for Hornbills <i>Chaired By Ms. Parveen Sheikh, Scientist-C, Conservation Department, BNHS Mumbai</i>
13:10-13:50	Protecting India's Freshwater Turtles: Research and Conservation Stories - by Dr. Arunima Singh , Sr Biologist & Chief Functionary at TSA Foundation India & Rescue & Rehabilitation of Freshwater Turtles by Mr. Ashish Panda , PhD Scholar at Wildlife Institute Of India, Senior Project Associate at NMCG-WII <i>Chaired By: Prof. Dr R J Rao, Former Vice Chancellor, BU Bhopal</i>
13:50-14:35	Lunch Break
	TECHNICAL SESSION - 3
14:35-15:00	Conservation Catalyst Programme - Supporting Grassroots actions for Lesser Known Species Conservation by Mr. Sanket Bhale , Director Central India & Head of Strategy, Design & Impact, WWF-India <i>Chaired By: Mrs. Sangita Saxena, State Director, WWF-India, M.P. & CG</i>
15:00-15:35	Responsible Tourism around Lesser-Known Species by Mr. Aly Rashid , Director & Field Naturalist, Jehannuma Wilderness, MP <i>Chaired By: Mr. Vikram Singh Parihar, IFS, Former FD, Pench Tiger Reserve, MP</i>
15:35-16:20	Communities in Conservation and responsible communication by Ms. Bhavna Menon , Independent Conservationist & Freelance Writer, Pune & Torchbearers of Conservation Mr. Radheshyam Pemani Bishnoi from Jaisalmer, Rajasthan & Mr. Chitrak Pramanik from Howrah West Bengal will present their eminent work & Journey. <i>Chaired By: Mr K Raman, IFS (Retd), Former APCCF, MP</i>
16:20-17:15	Fate of neglected species: Unveiling Wildlife Crime by Hunting Communities & Human-wildlife conflict by - Baiju Raj MV , Director - Conservation Projects for Wildlife SOS <i>Chaired By: Mr Jasbir Singh Chauhan, IFS (Retd), Former PCCF, MP</i>
17:15-17:45	Valedictory Session & Adoption of Workshop Recommendations
	Hi Tea
DAY-3 (19th January, 2025)	
06:15-11:00	FIELD VISIT TO VAN VIHAR NATIONAL PARK
07:00-08:30	Birdwatching in leadership of Mr. Ajay Gadikar & Dr. Gajanan Wagh
08.30 -10.00	Odonates (Dragonflies & Damselflies) Field Session - by Dr. Pankaj Koparde
10:00 -10:30	Breakfast followed by Group photo & Dispersal



Subharanjan Sen
IFS, PCCF Wildlife
& CWLW MP

1991 batch, MP Cadre after the initial in-service training started off as a probationer in Seoni district in 1994 which has the Pench Tiger reserve. After an optional wildlife training at WII Dehradun (PG Diploma in wildlife), was posted as Director, Satpura National Park in 1996. This was before it was notified as a Tiger Reserve.

In 1999 was transferred to Shivpuri as Director Madhav National Park. Thereafter posted as Deputy Director Pench Tiger Reserve in 2002. In 2005 was transferred to Kanha Tiger Reserve as Deputy Director. Was out of the state on deputation to the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun as Faculty (Scientist "F") for 6 years and finally in 2015 was posted as Field Director, Pench Tiger reserve.

After promotion to APCCF in 2018 have been in the Forest Headquarters in Bhopal. Back in the wildlife wing since March 2022 as APCCF (Wildlife). He is now leading the wildlife wing as PCCF Wildlife & Chief Wildlife Warden MP from Nov 2024 onwards.

Dr. Anish Andheria is the President of the Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT), Currently, WCT works in and around 160 National parks and wildlife sanctuaries spread across 27 states and union territories of India and catalyses path-breaking conservation action.

He is an Independent Director of Wildlife Conservation Society-India (WCS-India). He is part of the Organising Committee of the India Climate Collaborative and a member of the Advisory Committee of BNP Paribas India Foundation. He is a member of several Government Committees including the State Boards of Wildlife of Maharashtra and Jammu & Kashmir; the Maharashtra Coastal Zone Management Authority; Tiger Conservation Steering Committee of Madhya Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh Elephant Task Force.

In the past, he has also been a member of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), an apex body in the Central Government that governs tiger reserves of India. He has also served on the Governing Council and as the Honorary Secretary of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), India's oldest wildlife NGO. He has been awarded the prestigious Carl Zeiss Conservation Award in 2008 and the UAA-Institute of Chemical Technology Distinguished Alumnus Award 2017. He has helped set up Kids for Tigers, a nation-wide conservation education programme in 2000 that has reached out to several million school children till date.

He is a large carnivore biologist with immense knowledge on predator-prey relationships and has contributed to several carnivore conservation projects across India. A wildlife photographer of repute, he has photographed some of the most remote wildlife reserves of India.

He has co-authored two books on Indian wildlife and has contributed to several other books and publications, including scientific papers. A natural communicator, he is one of India's leading motivational speakers, and has introduced thousands of young people to the joys of nature and the rationale for nature conservation.



Dr. Anish Andheria
President - Wildlife
Conservation Trust



Dr. I P Bopanna
Landscape Coordinator
WWF-INDIA

A Wildlife Biologist with over 20 years of experience in carnivore management, ecological monitoring, and behavioural ecology, deeply committed to advancing conservation science and practice. Holds a Ph.D. from Saurashtra University & Wildlife Institute of India, with research focused on the ecology of Striped hyenas in Kutch, Gujarat, and an M.Sc. in Ecology from Pondicherry University. Throughout a distinguished career, has led a wide range of conservation initiatives aimed at species recovery, enhancing habitat connectivity, mitigating human-wildlife conflict, and promoting community-based conservation efforts. Possesses extensive expertise in wildlife handling, particularly in managing carnivores, and is skilled in urban ecology and developing conservation strategies that integrate ecological preservation with sustainable development. As Landscape Coordinator at WWF-India (Dehradun office), played a key role in tiger translocations, advancing landscape-level conservation, and building capacity among forest staff. Special interests include carnivore ecology, biogeography, evolutionary ecology, and designing innovative conservation strategies to tackle the challenges posed by urbanisation and infrastructure development on biodiversity and ecosystems.

He is the Joint Director and Chief Ecologist at Wildlife Trust of India and has been working with the organisation since 2003. His areas of expertise lie in Protected Area Management Planning; Participatory Conservation of Natural Ecosystems; River, Forest, and Grassland Ecosystems; species recovery through ex-situ and in-situ linkage, and landscape governance for nature and biodiversity conservation.



Samir K. Sinha, Ph.D.
Joint Director & Chief Ecologist
Wildlife Trust of India



Mr. Ajay Gadikar
Joint Secretary, TNV
Indore, Member of the
IUCN- Species Commission
for Hornbills

By profession is an IT entrepreneur, based in Indore, he is passionately fond of watching Birds and has spent countless hours in the field studying their behaviour.

Done Basic Course in Ornithology from BNHS, Mumbai in 2013. He is involved in long term monitoring (2009-till date) of Indian Grey Hornbill breeding ecology in Indore. Co-author of book "Threatened Birds of Madhya Pradesh" Published in 2021, Co-Author of book "Birds of Indore", published in 2019.

State coordinator for BNHS surveys of Lesser Florican, conducted in the western Madhya Pradesh. Member, IUCN-Species commission for Hornbills since 2017. Joint secretary of the NGO "The Nature Volunteers", involved in various environmental activities, with special focus on conservation of Wetlands. Performed Key role in educating birders to contribute in citizen.

science projects. Provided the important data for Sirpur Wetland and Yeswant Sagar Wetland in Indore to get nominated as Ramsar sites. He contributes to the Asian waterbird census each year. Conducted several field visits and training workshops for interested bird watchers. Many of his Research articles have been published in reputed journals. Has coordinated bird surveys in association with MP Forest Department. His wife and son both share the same hobby and are partners in crime.



Dr. Gajanan Wagh

Professor, Department of
Zoology, Shri Shivaji Science
College, Amravati, MH
Member of IUCN Asia
Hornbill Specialist Group

Research Experience: 25 Years

Area of Research: Ornithology, Wildlife Ecology, Biodiversity,

Research Platform: Orcid, Google Scholar, Research Gate, LinkedIn

Positions Held: Professor in the Department of Zoology.

Coordinator: Career Oriented Course -Eco-tourism & Wildlife Photography.

Significant Contributions:

Member-Amravati District Biodiversity Committee as a Bird Expert

Ex-Member- Animal Expert Committee of Maharashtra State

Biodiversity Board

Member- Technical committee of Melghat Tiger Reserve

Member- Technical committee for Protected Area in MTR

(Endangered wildlife habitat confirmation)

Secretary of Maharashtra Pakshimitra (2021-2024)

Treasurer- Wildlife & Environment Conservation Society (WECS).

Awards/Nominations/Honours:

1. "Seva Gaurav Puraskar-2023" (Best teacher Award) of SGBAU, Amravati.
2. "Best teacher Award-2023" of Shri Shivaji Science College, Amravati.
3. Recognition & Publication of Philatelic Presentation Pack
(Series 1-Endangered Species) with Painted Stork image by Indian Postal Department,
Oct 2023.
4. "Srushti Mitra Award- 2016" of Environmental Dept. of Maharashtra Government.
5. President of 16 th Vidarbha Pakshimitra Sammelan, Washim in 2015
6. Wildlife Photography Awards from Maharashtra State Biodiversity Board (2013 & 2014).

Paper Presentation in Abroad

1. Paper Presented in 5th International Hornbill Conference 2009, Singapore and 100% travel grants sanctioned from UGC for presenting the paper abroad.
2. Paper Presented in 6th International Hornbill Conference 2013, Manila, Philippines and 100% travel grant sanctioned from UGC for presenting the paper abroad.
3. Paper Presented in 7th International Hornbill Conference 2017, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia and 100% travel grant sanctioned from UGC for presenting the paper abroad.
4. Paper Presented in 8th International Hornbill Conference 2023, Bangkok, Thailand National Conference- (Organising Secretary- NCAAB- 2017)

An award-winning entomologist, educationist, entrepreneur and Storyteller. After working in the environment sector for more than two decades, she founded three entities; Ladybird Environmental Consulting, iNaturewatch Foundation, and Birdwing Publishers. She developed environmental mobile apps and online courses which are the first of their kind. Through her company, she carries out rejuvenation and reforestation works to improve biodiversity. She specializes in establishing butterfly and biodiversity parks. She works in the sphere of environmental CSR and environmental protection. She authored India's first-Field Guide to Indian Moths besides other books, mobile apps and training manuals for teachers. She is Fulbright Fellow and Hubert Humphrey Fellow, IUCN member for Commission on Education and Communication (CEC) and Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) and National Moth Week. A leadership case study was written on her by Babson College, United States. Winner of Green Teacher Award of Kirloskar Vasundhara in 2021 and 50 Most Innovative Storytellers Award by World Congress of Storytelling in 2023.



Dr. Shubhalaxmi V

Founder & Managing
Trustee Member of
IUCN Commission
on Education &
Communication



Dr. Arunima Singh is a conservationist, recognized for her tireless efforts to protect endangered freshwater turtles, tortoises, crocodilians, and Gangetic dolphins in India. Over the past decade, she has spearheaded the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of more than 35,000 turtles.

A PhD holder in population dynamics and reproductive ecology of Crowned River Turtle (*Hardella thurjii*) has been instrumental in shaping conservation strategies. She has also trained at renowned institutions like the Turtle Survival Center, Arizona and few international Zoo's like Bronx Zoo, New York and has mentored over 20 students in their master's dissertations and internships focused on freshwater turtles and tortoises.

Currently serving for the TSA Foundation India and is also an active member of the IUCN Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group (TFTSG). Her outstanding contributions have earned her several accolades, including the NatWest Group Earth Heroes Save the Species Award.



Dr. Arunima Singh

Sr. Biologist & Chief Functionary
TSA Foundation India



Devcharan Jathanna, PhD

Sr. Scientist & Programme
Head: Carnivore Conservation
Ecology, WCS-India

Profile: Education: MSc in Wildlife Science, Wildlife Institute of India; Ph.D. from Manipal University.

Expertise: Diverse methodologies such as distance sampling, occupancy estimation, capture-recapture and spatial capture-recapture modelling, other ecological modelling, as well as study design, field methods, data processing and validation protocols related to these.

Focus: Population biology, ecology and conservation of carnivores (small and large) and large herbivores, as well as other taxa (especially birds) collaboratively. Study design, fieldwork, data processing, and data analysis. Technical support to various research programs, collaborations with national and international institutions, fundraising and grant management. Also actively involved in teaching, training and guiding MSc and PhD students, faculty and staff, and conducting workshops across Asia for field researchers.

He has a master's degree in Limnology and doctoral degree in Wetland Management. He possesses more than 25 years of experiences in conservation and management of wetlands across different typologies in varied geographies in the country. As a representative of a knowledge partner to the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Dr. Dubey has contributed in planning and implementation of wetland conservation programmes across many states. He also specializes in preparation of Integrated Management Plans and has contributed in writing of more than ten Integrated Management plans for key wetlands, resulting in their enhanced management. He has a vast experience of implementing wetland restoration projects and has been associated with many high value projects including the Lakes Bhopal Conservation and Management Project, Conservation and management of Urban Wetlands of Bangalore, Restoration of Urban and Peri-Urban Wetlands of Bangalore and many others. He has been contributing in effective conservation and management of many Ramsar sites and other key wetlands in the country.



Dr. Amit Dubey

Head-Wetlands
WWF-India



Mr. Prasad Gaidhani

Wildlife Ecologist
WCT, Mumbai

Prasad's passion for nature and wildlife inspired him as a teenager to volunteer with a local NGO on environmental awareness initiatives. This enthusiasm led him to pursue a master's degree in Zoology. While studying, he assisted and interned on various biodiversity conservation projects, including the Wildlife Institute of India's dugong recovery program in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. In this role, he conducted ecological research on dugongs and seagrasses and organized outreach, awareness, and capacity-building workshops for various stakeholders.

Prasad works as a program manager at Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT). As a part of WCT's conservation Dog Unit, he has worked on wildlife sign surveys for the Road Ecology Project, wildlife tracking in conflict situations, and tracking pangolins. Currently, he is working on the Otter Ecology and Hydrology Project in the Satpura landscape.

Aly Rashid is the chief executive, curator of experiences and field naturalist at Jehan Numa Wilderness. He is an expedition leader at Jehan Numa Expeditions, and is truly at home in the wild places across the country and overseas. A trained naturalist and ornithologist, wildlife and wilderness has been a passion for Aly since his childhood and he has spent the most part of the last 15 years in Satpura and beyond, curating experiences and observing the wildlife of various landscapes. Aly Rashid is the chief executive, curator of experiences and field naturalist at Jehan Numa Wilderness and is truly at home in the wild places across the country. A trained naturalist and ornithologist, wildlife and wilderness has been a passion for Aly since his childhood and he has spent the most part of the last 15 years in Satpura and beyond, curating experiences and observing the wildlife of various landscapes.

It was a winter afternoon in Satpura Tiger Reserve, we had news of a sibling duo of sub adult tigers who had made a kill of an Indian Gaur near a river that skirts Satpura on its northern periphery. We were fortuitous that the location of the kill was accessible by boat. So off we went to search for the duo. As we arrived, we found the male sub adult cooling off in the water after a hearty meal. The background was just spectacular and it inspired me to take this image showcasing the magnificent tiger in its beautiful habitat. This image captures the essence of Satpura, watercourses, mixed forests and undulating terrain.



Aly Rashid

Director & Field Naturalist
Jehannuma Wilderness, MP



Bhavna Menon

Independent
Conservationist &
Freelance writer Pune

She is an independent conservationist and a freelance writer. Having worked in the conservation sphere for almost 15 years, she has been in charge of planning and executing projects in line with conflict mitigation, creation of alternative livelihoods in tandem with community members living around protected areas and capacity building/training with the Forest Department frontline staff.

She also contributes to different publications, with a strong focus on covering conservation stories and people. Apart from working with organisations in the capacity of a communications Consultant, she has been appointed as the Director (conservation) at Aaranyachar, a wildlife tourism outfit where she is in charge of promoting and curating ecotourism activities (community related) for guests travelling to different protected areas.

Dr. Manoj is an ecologist with over 20 years of experience in wetland conservation and management in India. He had worked with leading environmental organizations such as the Wetlands International South Asia with associated MoEFCC, National Centre for Human Settlement & Environment (NCHSE) and MPCST, Bhopal. Currently he is working in State Wetland Authority, EPCO, as Scientific Officer. He is involved in various projects on restoring wetland sites, enhancing wetland biodiversity, and improving community-based conservation practices. His notable contributions include documentation of Ramsar Sites Designation in Madhya Pradesh. He is also skilled in GIS mapping and policy development for sustainable wetland management.



Dr. Manoj Vishwakarma

Assistant Scientific Officer,
MPSWA, EPCO



Dr. Pankaj Koparde

Astt. Professor Department
of Environmental Studies
MIT-WPU Pune

Dr. Pankaj Koparde is an evolutionary ecologist working as an Assistant Professor with the Department of Environmental Studies, MIT-WPU Pune. His core expertise is in subjects such as Evolutionary Ecology, Urban Ecology, Biogeography, Biodiversity Informatics, and Science Communication. He primarily works on owls and dragonflies. He is an admin of two mega citizen science projects, DragonflySouthAsia and OwlIndia. He is a TEDx speaker and has delivered talks across popular platforms such as Towards and Ecological Landscape (TEL), Indian Society of Landscape Architects (ISOLA), and Science on Tap. He is a DST Young Scientist award; SAEVUS Rising Star of Conservation; Prakriti & EarthWatch Fellow. He is an IUCN Reviewer and actively engaged in research benefitting on-ground conservation. His work is featured in several newspapers and magazines. In their latest study his team discovered a new species of damselfly and named it after Ecological Armageddon. He is a member of two government committees such as the Panchagani Biodiversity Committee and Pashan Lake Conservation Committee. He is a member of the World Dragonfly Association USA, International Biogeography Society USA, and Society for Conservation Biology UK. He also works as an ecological consultant & subject matter expert with various organizations such as ERM, Ramboll, Ranwa, and corporates. He is also a published Marathi writer with a major interest in literary essays (Lalit). His lab group is known as Chatur Ullu Lab denoting the off beat research Dr. Koparde and his team are doing Dragonflies (Chatur) and Owls (Ullu).

Sanket is an MBA and a mechanical engineer with more than 15 years of experience in wide range of sectors. Sanket is currently leading WWF-India's work in Central India Landscape. His work spans Species & Habitat Management, Community engagement, Sustainable agriculture and Policy advocacy. He is also part of the team that manages WWF-India's flagship Conservation Catalyst Programme (CCP) for supporting Lesser-known species conservation through grassroots action. In his spare time, Sanket can be found trekking, cycling and scuba diving across the globe.



Sanket Bhale

Director - Central India
Programme, WWF-India



Ashish Panda

Senior Project Associate
& Ph.D. Scholar
Wildlife Institute of India

Ashish Panda currently works as a Senior Project Associate at the Wildlife Institute of India, actively engaged in the Namami Gange project, where he focuses on rescue, rehabilitation, and managing aquatic animals in captivity, with a special emphasis on turtles. He has successfully rescued and rehabilitated over 7,000 turtles in the Ganga River Basin. Ashish holds a Bachelor's degree in Zoology and a Master's in Wildlife Sciences. He began his professional journey as a Research Fellow at the Odisha Biodiversity Board, where he studied the turtle species Batagur baska and Pelochelys cantorii along India's east coast. Following this, he worked with the Forest Department of Odisha and contributed as a biologist to the All-India Tiger Monitoring project at the Wildlife Institute of India for two years in 2018. Currently, Ashish is pursuing a PhD through AcSIR, focusing on the behavior of captive turtles at the NMCG-WII lab. He has a diverse research background, having worked with various animal groups, especially reptiles, including research on gharials in the Gandak River. He also developed a new tool for digital morphometry of turtles, which was published in PLOS this year. He is a member of the IUCN SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group. With over five years dedicated to this work, Ashish remains committed to wildlife conservation, especially the freshwater ecosystems.



My areas of focus include coordination and management of all aspects of rescue, rehabilitation and welfare of animals.

Member:

1. IUCN SSC, Crocodile Specialist Group.
2. District Monitoring Committee- Captive Elephant Task Force, Kerala- AWBI
3. Joint Committee, Human Wildlife Conflict Mitigation, Tirumala, AP.

Volunteer- Wildlife Crime Control Bureau.

Academic qualifications.

1. MPhil in Ecological Informatics, Cochin University of Science and Technology, Kerala
2. MSc in Marine Geology, Mangalore University, Karnataka
3. PG Diploma in Environmental Science Mangalore University, Karnataka
4. BSc in Zoology, Kasaragod Govt. College, Kerala.
5. One-year course in herpetology.
6. Accomplished online course in Animal Behaviour and Welfare from University of Edinburgh.
7. Invited speaker for lectures in many institutes nationally and internationally.
8. More than 3 decades of experience in animal rescue, management, rehabilitation, release, and mitigation of man animal interactions.
9. Assisting the Forest Department in combating illegal wildlife trade.
10. Presented and published works related to animal rescue management, welfare and behaviour in National and International conferences.

Area of interest: Animal rescue, research and studies helps animal welfare and protection of species.

My work experience with wild animals started at a very young age. My area of interest and expertise includes: scientific rescue and welfare of wild animals, animal confiscation and its laws, community rehabilitation programs, mitigation of man-animal interactions, communication and knowledge sharing.



Baiju Raj MV
Director- Conservation
Projects for Wildlife SOS



Conducting Small Carnivore Research Using Camera Traps :Recommended Best Practices; Dr Devcharan Jathanna



Summary

The presentation discusses best practices for conducting small carnivore research using camera traps, emphasizing their impact on wildlife conservation and ecology. Camera traps, non-invasive devices that capture images or videos of wildlife, are crucial for studying species densities, distributions, and activity patterns. The text outlines key steps in the research process, including setting clear objectives, designing surveys, selecting camera trap locations, and maintaining meticulous records. It highlights the importance of customized survey designs tailored to specific species and habitats, as well as the need for rigorous data validation and processing to ensure accurate wildlife monitoring.



Key Insights

1. Camera traps have transformed wildlife research, particularly for elusive small carnivores, enhancing understanding of their distributions and behaviors.
2. Clearly defined objectives and customized survey designs are essential for effective camera trapping studies.
3. Attention to detail in equipment setup and data management is critical for accurate data collection and analysis.
4. Random and optimized selection of camera trap locations can significantly influence data quality and research outcomes.
5. Continuous data validation and statistical analysis are necessary to ensure the reliability of findings and inform conservation strategies.

Policy Takeaways

1. Encourage camera trapping for documentation and study of wildlife as part of citizen science projects.
2. The government needs to issue clarification on the use of camera trap photography in revenue areas and private lands outside Wildlife Sanctuaries and other protected areas.

Stripes in the shadow: The story of striped hyena ; Mr I.P. Bopanna



Summary

The striped hyena (*Hyaena hyaena*) is the only hyaena species found outside Africa, belonging to the family Hyaenidae. It exhibits distinct physical features, such as a heavy head, vertical stripes, and a well-developed anal pouch, with no sexual dimorphism. Striped hyenas are primarily nocturnal and solitary foragers, maturing sexually at 2-3 years and typically producing 3-4 cubs. They are scavengers with adaptations for bone consumption, residing in diverse habitats but favoring arid to semi-arid environments. The dens can be simple with 3-4 opening to a complex of several dens. Their social behavior is complex, involving various interactions within clans.



Key Insights

1. Hyenas exhibit a solitary foraging behavior and are primarily nocturnal, adapting to human presence by maintaining temporal separation.
2. Their diet mainly consists of scavenging, with strong adaptations for bone consumption, utilizing powerful jaws and specialized teeth.
3. Social behaviors within clans include aggression, play, grooming, and vocalization, indicating a complex social structure.
4. Conservation challenges include habitat loss, disease, and human-induced mortality (eg. human-planted snares), necessitating focused monitoring and protection efforts.

Policy Takeaways

1. Their habitats outside Protected Areas need significant attention, especially for protection and monitoring of denning sites from anthropogenic threats and diseases.
2. There is a need for establishing carcass dumping sites for the hyaenas to obtain nutrition.
3. Incorporation of genetic technology in research to understand the kinship, gene-flow across landscapes and the diseases.

Otter Ecology and Hydrology; Mr Prasad Gaidhani



Summary

India is home to three species of otters- Asian Small-Clawed Otter, Smooth-Coated Otter and Eurasian Otter. The presentation by Prasad Gaidhani explores the critical link between ecology of Eurasian otters (*Lutra lutra*) and hydrology in the Satpura landscape, focusing on their habitat, seasonal distribution, and conservation. The project includes telemetry studies, hydrological monitoring of forest streams, and habitat assessments. The findings highlight the impact of climate change, water availability, and ecological stress on otter populations. The research underscores the role of otters as bioindicators of aquatic ecosystem health, emphasizing the need for long-term monitoring and conservation strategies.



Key Insights

1. Otters serve as a key species for assessing the health of freshwater ecosystems. Their presence in a region often indicates clean and well-functioning aquatic environments.
2. Baseline information about forest hydrological systems are important for understanding habitat requirements for rare aquatic species such as otters.
3. The dry deciduous forests have limited water resources and climate change impacts such as changing rainfall patterns, rising temperatures influence the water availability in streams. Otters are highly sensitive to changes in water availability, temperature, and water quality.
4. The threats to the otter population include habitat fragmentation due to infrastructure development, pollution from industrial and agricultural runoff, and human disturbances such as fishing and sand mining.

Policy Takeaways

1. Since otters are also found outside protected areas, expanding conservation zones and creating buffer areas around key river systems can be beneficial.
2. Need for long-term monitoring to help detect early signs of ecological stress and inform conservation strategies.
3. Engagement with local communities in conservation efforts through awareness campaigns, sustainable fishing practices, and incentives for habitat protection.

Cracking the Code: Moth Identification and Citizen Science; Dr. V. Shubhalaxmi



Summary

Dr. V. Shubhalaxmi's work on moth identification revealed the complexities of studying these diverse insects, with over 160,000 species worldwide. Her journey, guided by her mentor Late Naresh Chaturvedi, Curator (BNHS), led to the creation of India's first comprehensive field guide on Indian moths, published in 2018. Identification of moths is painstaking, requiring attention to morphological traits and, sometimes, genetic analysis to confirm species. Misidentifications often occur due to cryptic species and gender dimorphism. The reliance on accurate data is emphasized, as poor-quality information can misguide conservation efforts and policy-making. The presentation also encouraged citizen scientists to follow best practices in data collection and identification.



while acknowledging the limitations of amateur observation. Ultimately, enhancing data quality through collaboration and modern techniques is vital for effective biodiversity research and conservation.

Key Insights

1. Moth identification is complex due to the vast diversity and similar appearances of species.
2. Due to the night shifts required to conduct research on moths, there are various hurdles with the on-ground logistics.
3. The success of citizen-science hinges on proper guidelines, reliable tools, and training. Eg. apps like iNaturalists
4. Modern techniques like DNA barcoding and taxonomic databases are crucial in correcting historical misidentifications.
5. Roads, lights and excessive pesticides cause a major hindrance to the existence of moths.

Policy Takeaways

1. Incorporating courses on moths in school and college curriculum.
2. Encourage and support research on moths by government and non-government institutions.
3. Open-access platforms like the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) and the India Biodiversity Portal must be leveraged to promote data sharing and validation by experts.

Panel Discussion on 'Wildlife Outside Protected Areas' ; : Debadityo Sinha (Moderator)



Introduction

The panel discussion, moderated by Debadityo Sinha (Lead, Climate & Ecosystems, Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy), explored the critical need for wildlife conservation beyond designated Protected Areas (PAs). The session brought together esteemed experts in wildlife conservation, including Dr Suhas Kumar, IFS (Retd.) (Former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, MP), R. Srinivasa Murthy, IFS (Retd.) (Ex- Member Secretary, MP State Biodiversity Board), Dr Anish Andheria (President, Wildlife Conservation Trust), Prof Yogesh Dubey (Faculty, Indian Institute of Forest Management), and Ms Parveen Sheikh (Scientist-C, Bombay Natural History Society). The discussion emphasised that wildlife conservation must extend beyond the boundaries of PAs, given that a significant proportion of wildlife depend on such landscapes which include forests, agricultural lands, riparian ecosystems, and community-managed areas. The panellists highlighted the urgent need to shift from an isolated PA-centric approach to a more integrated, landscape-level conservation strategy, balancing



scientific policy, sustainable development, and local community participation to ensure long-term biodiversity protection.

Key Issues Discussed

1. Importance of Wildlife Beyond Protected Areas – A significant proportion of wildlife, including tigers, wolves, and many migratory species exists outside PAs, relying on forests, agricultural lands, community-owned landscapes, and riparian zones for survival and movement. However, due to lesser protection and monitoring, such habitats are most threatened.
2. Habitat Loss and Fragmentation – The alteration of land for development purposes, without giving due consideration to wildlife, results in the destruction of natural ecosystems and the local extinction of species. Infrastructure projects such as roads, railways, dams and alike fragment continuous habitats, thereby limiting the movement of species across landscapes.
3. Disturbance from unsustainable tourism– Unchecked religious activities and unregulated tourism disturb wildlife and natural ecosystems, especially outside PAs due to lesser restrictions and monitoring. When poorly managed, ecotourism becomes a source of habitat disturbance rather than a conservation tool. Local communities and low-footprint tourism must be central to any ecotourism model.
4. Risks from Free-ranging domestic animals- The increasing population of free-ranging domestic animals, especially dogs pose a major threat to wildlife from zoonotic diseases and predation risks. Similarly, unsustainable population of livestock in forest and open natural ecosystems compete with wild herbivores and change prey-predator behaviour, often leading to increased human-wildlife conflict.
5. Threats to Riverine Ecosystems and Wetlands – Several river systems lack adequate protection. Changes in water flow, dams, pollution, and sand mining are impacting breeding grounds and aquatic habitats. Wetlands and their catchments are frequently being converted for development purposes. Excessive groundwater extraction and irrigation are reducing freshwater availability, which affects both human and wildlife requirements.
6. Issues from Sand Mining – Sand mining in river habitats presents a conservation challenge, particularly for bird and reptile species. The alteration of riverbeds, sandbanks, and other ecological features impacts their habitat, while increased erosion contributes to broader ecological changes.



7. Concerns Over Afforestation Practices – Large-scale tree plantations often disregard biodiversity. Forest restoration should focus on ecosystem-based approaches instead of monoculture plantations, which offer limited ecological benefits to wildlife.

8. Weak Implementation of Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) – According to the 2011 MoEFCC guidelines, ESZs should buffer existing PAs and protect wildlife corridors between different PAs. However, insufficient ESZ boundaries and poor interdepartmental coordination hinder their effective implementation on ground.

Key Takeaways

1. Strengthen Legal Protections for Wildlife Outside Protected Areas – Protect wildlife habitats beyond PAs, including community landscapes, riparian zones, and agricultural lands. Designations like Conservation/Community Reserves can safeguard wildlife in human-dominated areas. Important habitats near PAs and corridors connecting PAs should be managed as 'Eco Sensitive Zones'.
2. Safeguarding Wildlife in Developmental Planning – Infrastructure projects should use wildlife-sensitive designs to preserve ecological connectivity. When possible, linear projects should avoid wildlife areas. Urban and rural development planning must have a biodiversity management plan.
3. Regulate Ecotourism and Religious Activities – Implement strict guidelines for ecotourism and involve local communities in management. Regulate large religious gatherings based on ecological capacity.
4. Address Threats from Free-ranging Domestic Animals – Implement policies for stray animal management and disease surveillance, especially where domestic animals interact with wildlife. Manage the population of free-ranging dogs to reduce predation and zoonotic disease risks to wild animals.
5. Protect Riverine Ecosystems and Wetlands – Implement river conservation policies in collaboration with State Government departments to maintain natural water flows and regulate dams, minimizing ecological disruption. Conservation planning should address river-level strategies beyond the water channel. Coordination with departments such as Public Works and Irrigation can prevent developmental activities around wetlands and rivers from negatively impacting wildlife.
6. Combat Illegal Sand Mining – Enhance enforcement to protect sensitive river habitats. Implement strict monitoring and promote sustainable material alternatives to reduce reliance on river sand.
7. Implement Biodiversity-Oriented Afforestation – Revise compensatory afforestation policies to prioritize local ecosystem restoration instead of large-scale monocultures. Incorporate ecological and biodiversity-based criteria in afforestation projects to ensure restored landscapes support wildlife.



Wetlands in Madhya Pradesh: Status, Ecosystem Services, and Ramsar Sites; Dr. Manoj Vishwakarma



Summary

The presentation discussed the wetlands in Madhya Pradesh, highlighting their types, ecosystem services, and conservation status. Wetlands serve as crucial transition zones between aquatic and terrestrial habitats, encompassing various forms such as lakes, ponds, rivers, and marshes. They provide vital ecosystem services including groundwater recharge, biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration, and support for local economies through agriculture and aquaculture. The Madhya Pradesh State Wetland Authority ('SWA') oversees the conservation and management of these wetlands, including the implementation of the Ramsar Convention, which aims to promote sustainable use and conservation. Further, this presentation discussed the challenges



faced, prohibited activities, and ongoing initiatives to enhance wetland management and awareness among local stakeholders.

Key Insights

1. Wetlands in Madhya Pradesh cover approximately 5,420 km² and are critical for biodiversity and ecosystem services.
2. Ecosystem services provided by wetlands include flood control, water quality improvement, and supporting local livelihoods through fishing and agriculture.
3. Wetland Rules (Conservation and Management) 2017 ('Rules') notified under the Environment Protection Act which mention the prohibited activities under Section 4 of the Rules.
4. Prohibited activities in wetlands aim to prevent degradation, including industrial expansion, waste dumping, and poaching.
5. Recent efforts by the MPSWA focus on electronic documentation of wetlands and awareness programs. Eg. Wetlands Inventory and GIS Web portal developed by the MPSWA.

Policy Takeaways

1. Conservation initiatives like Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, Amrit Dharohar and Mission Sahbhagita focus on integrated management, stakeholder awareness and income generation for local communities.
2. With the help of Technical committee and Grievances committee under the SWA documentation and monitoring of the wetlands could be conducted.



Multi Stakeholder Action For Wetland Conservation Experiences And Lessons; Dr. Amit Dubey



Summary

The need for multi-stakeholder engagement in wetland conservation is essential for preserving aquatic biodiversity, as evidenced by several initiatives in India. Shared resources like rivers and wetlands face threats from conflicting interests among stakeholders, necessitating active collaboration. Successful examples include the Harike Wetland and Beas Conservation Reserve, where local communities, termed Dolphin Mitras, monitor dolphin populations and share data with conservation teams. Other initiatives, such as turtle conservation in the Ganga Basin and the Kokkarebellur Community Reserve for pelicans and storks, put forward community-led efforts to safeguard species and habitats. Through training and awareness, these programs have fostered stronger ties between local communities and biodiversity, leading to improved conservation outcomes.



Key Insights

1. Catchment degradation, fragmentation, sewage inflow and proliferation of invasive species (eg. alligator weeds) are major threats to the wetlands.
2. Multi-stakeholder engagement including local communities, farmers, local bodies such as Multi-Stakeholder Committee (MSM) headed by Deputy Commissioner, Bangalore Rural empowered through a government order crucial for effective aquatic biodiversity conservation.
3. Community stewardship in protection of turtle nesting sites, rescue of dolphins etc., enhances monitoring and conservation outcomes. Eg. activities like 'wetland chaupals' for discussion on wetland conservation
4. Education and awareness initiatives significantly influence community attitudes towards conservation.

Policy Takeaways

1. Mobilisation of resources for restoration of wetlands through activities like dewatering, desilting, and restoration of hydrological connectivity is essential.
2. Collaborative efforts to encourage organic farming and sustainable practices as against the floodplain (pallage) farming.
3. Implementation of the 'Urban Wetland/Water Bodies Management Guidelines' by the National Mission for Clean Ganga for the management of wetlands and water bodies in urban areas.



Engaging Communities for Wetland Conservation Successes and Insights; Dr Samir Kumar Sinha



Summary

The presentation discussed the importance of community engagement in wetland conservation, emphasizing a shift from a strict protection model to one that respects local interests and fosters stewardship. It also outlined the Sarus Habitat Securement Project in Uttar Pradesh, focusing on the conservation of the Sarus crane, a species threatened by habitat degradation and human activities. This project involves raising awareness, building institutions like Sarus Protection Committees, and creating a volunteer network for monitoring and protecting wetlands. To further the same, key strategies include educating agricultural communities, developing management plans for wetlands, and legally securing these areas while addressing challenges such as inter-village conflicts and local political dynamics.



Key Insights

1. Community engagement is essential for effective wetland management and conservation, shifting from a strict protection model to one that involves local stakeholders.
2. The Sarus crane serves as an indicator species for wetland health, highlighting the interconnectedness of agricultural practices and ecosystem health.
3. Training and capacity building for community members and local organizations are crucial for sustainable wetland management.
4. Discussion on Sarus Habitat Securement Project in Eastern Uttar Pradesh ('UP') in collaboration with UP Forest Department, Tata Trusts and other stakeholders.
5. Legal frameworks, such as the Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, are necessary for the formal protection of critical wetland areas.

Policy Takeaways

1. Awareness about protected species amongst local people to prevent criminal prosecution under wildlife laws.
2. Catchment conservation plans should be developed at watershed scales and based on Joint Forest Management approaches as under the 'Guidelines for implementing Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017'.
3. Need to secure wetlands through inclusive and community-based management approaches.

The Dwindling Waterfowl counts at the Ramsar sites of Indore; Mr Ajay Gadikar



Summary

The presentation by Ajay Gadikar highlighted the sudden decline in waterfowl counts at the Ramsar sites in Indore, specifically Sirpur Lake and Yeshwant Sagar. Sirpur Lake, a 670-acre manmade lake established over 130 years ago, has seen a drastic reduction in waterfowl populations, particularly migratory ducks, which have plummeted from four-digit to two-digit numbers in the past decade. The main threats to these habitats include urbanization, illegal fishing, encroachments, and the proliferation of water hyacinth. Similarly, Yeshwant Sagar has faced similar declines due to urban pressures and environmental changes. Efforts by NGOs such as The Nature Volunteers are focused on mitigating these issues through education and awareness initiatives. The



State of India's Birds report further confirms the declining trends in both migratory and resident bird populations across the country.

Key Insights

1. Significant decline in waterfowl populations including migratory fauna at Sirpur Lake and Yeshwant Sagar.
2. Urbanization, encroachment of wetlands, invasive species and illegal fishing are reported to be main drivers of environmental degradation.
3. Construction activities under beautification of the wetlands actually cause damage to the wildlife habitats around the wetland.
4. Efforts needed by the municipal bodies and civil society to monitor and raise awareness among local residents.

Policy Takeaways

1. Adequate management of municipal waste and polluted water from reaching the wetlands.
2. Guidelines to prevent damage to the wetland edges and its catchment from construction activities such as beautification, landscaping and urban development.
3. Need to mobilise resources for removal of the invasive species such as water hyacinth in the wetlands.



Protecting India's Freshwater Turtles: Research and Conservation Strategies; Dr Arunima Singh & Rescue and Rehabilitation of Freshwater Turtles; Ashish K. Panda



Summary

The joint presentation by Dr. Arunima Singh and Mr. Ashish Panda highlighted the critical challenges faced by freshwater turtles and tortoises in India. With 30 species (38 taxa), India ranks third in global turtle diversity. However, multiple threats such as habitat destruction, illegal wildlife trade, and lack of coordinated conservation efforts have placed several species at risk. The Red-Crowned Roofed Turtle (*Batagur kachuga*), among the 25 most threatened turtle species, is now restricted to the Chambal River, with fewer than 500 adult females surviving. Additionally, the Dr. Singh presentation discussed other major ongoing turtle projects involving projects on involving the most threatened species in India, such as *Batagur dhongoka*, *Chitra indica*, *Hardella thurjii*, *Geoclemys hamiltonii*, *Batagur baska*, *Nilssonina nigricans*. Conservation efforts include in-situ and ex-situ breeding programs, nest protection, and post-release monitoring, etc. Despite ongoing efforts, the conservation challenges remain due to limited viable populations and weak institutional coordination. Mr Panda discussed several dedicated turtle rescue and rehabilitation centers that have been established across different states, with a focus on proper veterinary care, marking, monitoring, and safe release into natural habitats. He suggested stakeholder engagement, including the training of veterinary professionals, forest officials, local communities, and academic institutions, to enhance conservation efforts.



KEY INSIGHTS

1. India has 30 species of turtles and tortoises, making it one of the most biodiverse regions for these species. However, habitat degradation, pollution, poaching, illegal trade, and lack of awareness have led to a decline in turtle populations.
2. Turtles are keystone species in wetlands and help to keep the wetlands clean and healthy.
3. Conservation initiatives include breeding programs across northern India, Assam, and Nagaland, with measures such as nest protection, hatchling releases, and radio tracking.
4. Post-release monitoring of the turtles is done by tracking movement patterns through aquatic/ radio/ satellite transmitters
5. The "KURMA" application allows individuals to track and report turtle sightings, aiding conservation research.

Policy Takeaways

1. Initiatives like Kukrail Guided Nature Tour to raise awareness and dispel myths about reptilians among various sections through interactive programs.
2. Need for environmental enrichment to mirror the original habitat of the turtles before their release in natural habitat.
3. Efficient tagging and post-release monitoring programs need to be adopted for positive conservation outcomes.
4. Need to strengthen enforcement against poaching and illegal trade through monitoring and stringent penalties.



Conservation Catalyst Program; Mr. Sanket Bhale



Summary

The Conservation Catalyst Programme ('CCP'), part of WWF's Small Grants Programme (2010-2022), awarded 51 projects with an average grant size of INR 1.84 lakhs until 2014 and INR 3.24 lakhs thereafter. Targeting young researchers and community members, the program supports grassroots conservation initiatives, focusing on lesser-known species and habitats. This initiative has fostered mentorship, networking, and capacity-building beyond financial aid, with notable projects including efforts for freshwater crabs and hoolock gibbons. The achievements include increased funding for awardees and community-driven conservation actions.



Key Insights

1. The CCP focuses on neglected and lesser-known species. The support goes beyond the short-term funding of 1.5 years to up to 6 lacs.
2. Some of the notable projects have been Shivpuri Jalashay Sanrakshan Abhiyan, Black Soldier Fly Larvae Facility in Kadur and mapping of the land-use changes and faunal diversity in the Mangar Bani Hills (Aravallis)
3. CCP emphasizes on supporting grassroots leadership and technical skills for the grants .
4. The initiative has successfully raised awareness and funding for lesser-known species and habitats.

Policy Takeaways

1. Research and conservation programs in lesser known and neglected habitats need to be promoted by government and non-government organizations.
2. Building a structured partnership with the on-ground researchers and conservation professionals to ensure capacity building, data collection and project management.

Responsible Tourism around Lesser-Known Species; Mr Aly Rashid



Summary

The presentation discussed the potential and importance of wildlife tourism beyond well-known species like tigers, focusing on the diverse ecosystems of Satpura region. It highlighted the unique flora and fauna, including lesser-known mammals, reptiles, and amphibians, while emphasizing the role of eco-tourism in conservation and community development. The economic benefits of ecotourism are noted, with revenue contributing significantly to local economies and providing alternative livelihoods. It also stressed the necessity of sustainable practices in ecotourism, addressing challenges like carbon footprints and waste management while showcasing successful community-led initiatives.



Key Insights

1. Wildlife tourism in Madhya Pradesh can thrive by focusing on lesser-known species, promoting biodiversity conservation.
2. Responsible ecotourism practices can enhance education, awareness and monitoring of wildlife.
3. Involvement of local communities and livelihood opportunities are crucial for the success of eco-tourism.
4. Addressing sustainability challenges, including managing carbon footprints and waste, is essential for long-term viability.

Policy Takeaways

1. Guidelines to ensure ecotourism activities respect local environmental carrying capacity and do not adversely affect the species in focus.
2. Implementation of schemes such as National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism, Travel for LiFE launched by the Ministry of Tourism.
3. Involvement of the local communities in the eco-tourism activities.

Communities In Conservation & Responsible Communication; Ms Bhavna Menon



SUMMARY

The presentation by Bhavna Menon focused on how local communities play a vital role in conservation efforts and how their engagement can be effectively integrated into wildlife and environmental preservation. It emphasized on the deep relationship of local communities with nature. She was accompanied by **Satakshi, Redhabai and Pushma** from the Pardi community who also shared their experiences of building skills and creating livelihood. It reaffirmed



the idea that conservation is most effective when communities are at the centre of the strategies. It helps in creating alternative livelihoods, raising awareness, and leveraging traditional knowledge.

KEY INSIGHTS

1. Traditional knowledge owned by the local communities is an asset. Simple interaction like tea-time conversations helped her in learning about that knowledge.
2. She shared a case where the Pardi community traditionally hunted birds of the francolin family using a whistle which is now used as a souvenir for the tourists.
3. The conservation efforts must focus on children because they are the drivers of generational shifts.
4. The local women can run various sustainable income sources such as handmade textile items and jewellery.
5. Examples of entrepreneurial work with the communities were showcased as successful models to be replicated. Eg. millets in agriculture, block-printing work, toy-making etc.

Policy Takeaways

1. Need to construct initiatives like capacity building for the forest frontline staff to encourage community training in eco-tourism, safari opportunities, etc.
2. Institutional support through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, philanthropic activities and government grants must be encouraged to support livelihood, education for the local communities around protected landscapes.



Sub-Communities in Conservation and responsible communication; Radheshyam Pemani Bishnoi, Shravan Patel



Summary

The Bishnoi community, located in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan, India, is dedicated to wildlife conservation and sustainable living, following the teachings of Guru Jambheshwar. The movement began in the 1700s when villagers, led by Amrita Devi, protested against the cutting of sacred trees by royal soldiers. The community has been involved in protecting endangered species like the Great Indian Bustard (GIB), which now finds refuge in the Thar Desert. Despite their efforts, challenges such as habitat destruction, roadkill, and the spread of invasive species threaten wildlife. The community is actively engaged in awareness campaigns, habitat monitoring, and creating GIB-friendly environments, emphasizing the importance of community-led conservation initiatives.



Further, Bishnoi and Patel discussed water and plastic pollution and invasive species affecting the local flora and fauna of the area.

Key Insights

1. The Great Indian Bustard is a critically endangered bird, with its population increasing in community-managed lands, highlighting the significance of community conservation efforts.
2. The major threats to the GIBs are the overhead power lines and free-ranging dogs.
3. Current challenges include unwanted infrastructure, road accidents, overgrazing, and habitat changes due to pesticides.
4. Water scarcity is a critical issue in the Thar Desert, and the community works to ensure wildlife has access to water resources.
5. Community awareness and education are essential for promoting wildlife conservation and addressing threats to biodiversity.

Policy Takeaways

1. Implementation of Animal Birth Control programs to control the population of free-ranging dogs.
2. Water Pollution in the water bodies needs to be addressed to protect the natural flora and fauna in the area such as blackbucks and Rohida (*tecomella*) trees.

Conservation in Action: Saving Species Together; Chitrak Pramanik



Summary

Chitrak Pramanik, a wildlife rescuer and conservationist from Howrah, West Bengal, emphasized on the importance of community collaboration in wildlife conservation, particularly focusing on the protection of vulnerable species like small mammals and herpetofauna in human dominated landscapes. The presentation highlighted significant threats to these species, including habitat loss and illegal poaching. Moreover, Pramanik shared success stories of rescuing and rehabilitating species, such as fishing cats and turtles, and discussed community-based initiatives aimed at conservation. He also mentioned awareness programs targeting illegal wildlife trade and snakebite prevention, alongside the importance of media coverage in promoting conservation efforts. The overarching message is a call to action for collective responsibility in preserving wildlife.



Key Insights

1. The fishing cat population is declining due to habitat destruction, road accidents and other negative human wildlife interactions.
2. Community engagement is crucial for the conservation of threatened species like the peacock softshell turtle and Indian flapshell turtle.
3. Successful rehabilitation efforts after rescue are crucial for the survival of the species.
4. Media coverage can enhance the visibility of conservation work and inspire greater community engagement.

Policy Takeaways

1. Undertake awareness programs to combat illegal wildlife trade and educate the public about rescue operations.
2. Collaboration with the Forest Department and local bodies to ensure human-wildlife coexistence



Fate Of Neglected Species-Unveiling Wildlife Crime By Hunting Communities and Human-Wildlife Conflict; Mr Baiju Raj M.V



SUMMARY

Baiju Raj M.V., the Director of Conservation Projects at Wildlife SOS, provided insights into wildlife rescue operations, human-wildlife conflict, and illegal wildlife trade. He highlighted the organization's 30 years of experience in conservation, working in collaboration with multiple institutions and forest departments. Wildlife SOS operates rescue centers for hyenas, snakes, jackals, fishing cats across India, while also running a 24/7 Wildlife Rescue Unit in key locations like Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, and Delhi-NCR. A key focus was the human-wildlife conflict project, particularly in Chhattisgarh, where elephants are radio-collared for monitoring. Data indicated a rise in rescues from 1,300 in 2020 to 1430 in 2021 and over 2000 in 2024 due



to habitat degradation and human activities. He also emphasized the role of informal networks in reporting wildlife crimes and the importance of legal frameworks to punish offenders.

KEY INSIGHTS

1. The growing number of wildlife rescues reflects habitat degradation, urbanization, and changing human activities, particularly in peak hours.
2. India ranks among the top 20 countries for illegal wildlife trafficking, valued at \$30 billion globally, with pet trade being a growing concern.
3. The legal battle for the animals involves the State Forest Department, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, State police and the local governments.
4. Many communities lack awareness about harmless species, leading to unnecessary killings and rescues.

Policy Takeaways

1. Illegal trafficking of live animals is a serious concern which also acts as a pathogen carrier.
2. Public awareness campaigns should focus on coexistence and responsible reporting of wildlife encounters.
3. Conservation policies should address habitat loss to reduce human-wildlife conflict.



List of Registered Participants

S.No	Name	Designation/Institution	Category	Email Id
1	Dr. Sanjay Shukla	PCCF & Member Secretary Central Zoo Authority, New Delhi	Eminent Guest	
2	Dr. Rajesh Saxena	Ex Sr. Principal Scientist, MPCST	Eminent Guest	
3	Dr. Suhas Kumar	IFS (Retd), Former PCCF, MP	Eminent Guest	
4	R Srinivasa Murthy	IFS (Retd), Ex Member Secretary, MPSBB	Eminent Guest	
5	Mr Jasbir Singh Chauhan	IFS (Retd), Former PCCF, MP	Eminent Guest	
6	Mr. K Raman	IFS (Retd), Former APCCF, MP	Eminent Guest	
7	Mr Vikram Singh Parihar	IFS (Retd), Former Field Director, Pench TR, MP	Eminent Guest	
8	Dr Anish Andheria	President, Wildlife Conservation Trust, Mumbai, MH	Eminent Guest & Speaker	
9	Dr Samir K. Sinha	Joint Director & Chief Ecologist Wildlife Trust of India	Eminent Guest & Speaker	
10	Dr IP Bopanna	Landscape Coordinator, WWF-INDIA	Speaker	
11	Mr. Ajay Gadikar	Joint Secretary, TNV Indore, Member of the IUCN-Species Commission for Hornbills	Speaker	
12	Dr. Shubhalaxmi V	Founder & Managing Trustee	Speaker	



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13	Dr. Arunima Singh	Sr. Biologist & Chief Functionary TSA Foundation India	Speaker	
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15	Dr. Amit Dubey	Head-Wetlands WWF- India	Speaker	
16	Mr. Prasad Gaidhani	Wildlife Ecologist WCT, Mumbai	Speaker	
17	Aly Rashid	Director & Field Naturalist Jehannuma Wilderness, MP	Speaker	
18	Bhavna Menon	Independent Conservationist & Freelance Writer Pune	Speaker	
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➤ **Around 800+ Online Participants Youtube Live**

Youtube Live Link Day 01

Link : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5e593ofk48>

▶ 3rd National Conference on Lesser-Known Species of MP : Day-01

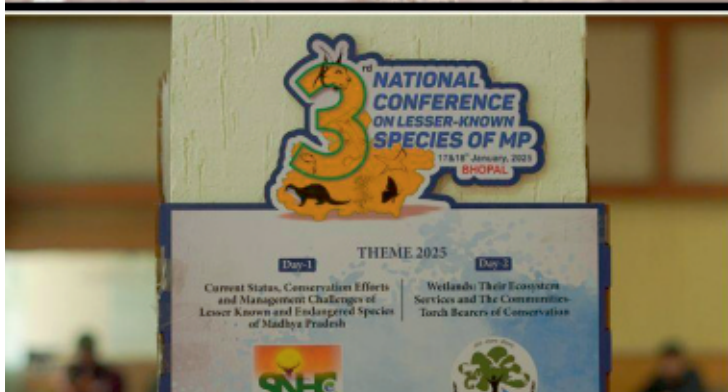
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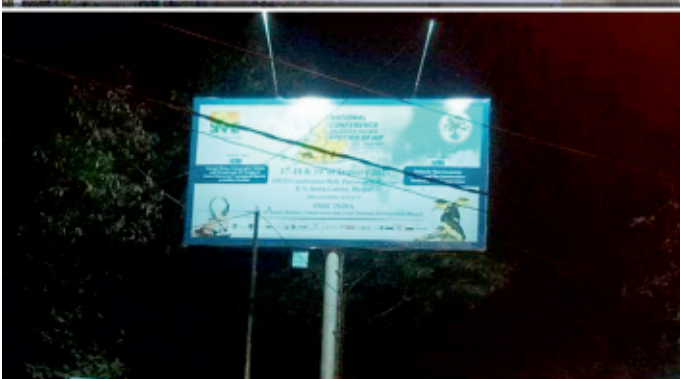
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▶ 3rd National Conference on Lesser-Known Species of MP : Day-02



Conference Glimpses

















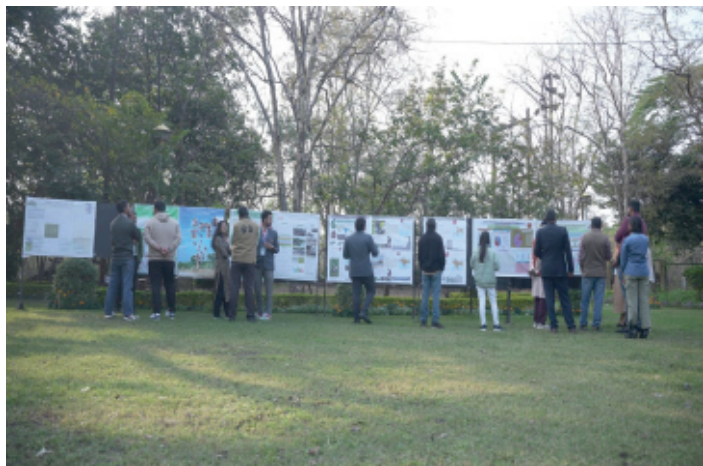


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Poster Presentation



Day 03 Van Vihar (Field Visit)





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