



WII
e- NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 33 | ISSUE 1
SPRING EDITION

2026



भारतीय वन्यजीव संस्थान
Wildlife Institute of India

Rethinking Lianas: A Nuanced Ecological Perspective	01
Field Biologists on an elusive Owl's trail	05
Sweat, Tears, and Very Loud Monkeys	11
First Touch of a Wild Sentient: Adrenaline Rush and Feeling of Being Alive	15
Ten Days, Fifteen Journeys, One Shared Passion	19
The Stillness I Travelled Through: A Tehri Reflection	27
A Celebration of Youth, Water, and Conservation	29
A Decade of Excellence: Wildlife Institute of India Builds Global Capacities in Wildlife Health at the 11 th Interventions in Wild Animal Health (IWAH) Field Course	30
Strengthening the Frontline: Wildlife Institute of India Empowers Chandigarh Forest Department in Human-Wildlife Conflict Management	33

CONTENTS

Bal Ganga Prahari Corner: Inspiring Future River Guardians	35
Activities of EIACP Centre, Wildlife Institute of India	37
Heritage: A Connector of Countries, Landscapes & Stories	49
Ripples of Change: Water, Women, and Conservation in Action	53
Blood Donation Camp	55
WII Community Convened to Discuss the 'Seva Sankalp Resolution', Dehradun, 3 March 2026	56
हिंदी कार्यशाला- सरकारी पत्राचार एवं टिप्पण आलेखन	57
Republic Day Celebration at Wildlife Institute of India	58
40 th Certificate Course in Wildlife Management, Dehradun (1 st November 2025 – 31 st January 2026)	59
Legacy in Retirement: Honouring Our Retired Personnel	60







Photo credit: Rishav Bhatnagar

Rethinking Lianas: A Nuanced Ecological Perspective

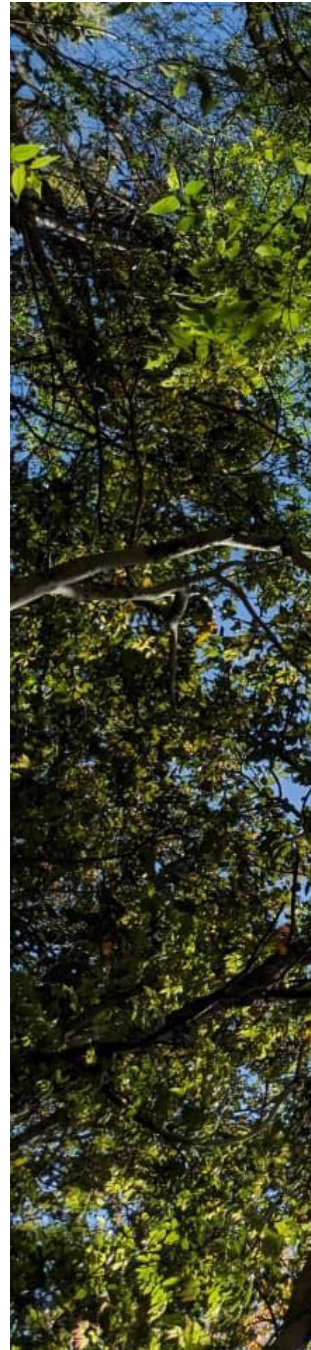
- Satyam Saumya

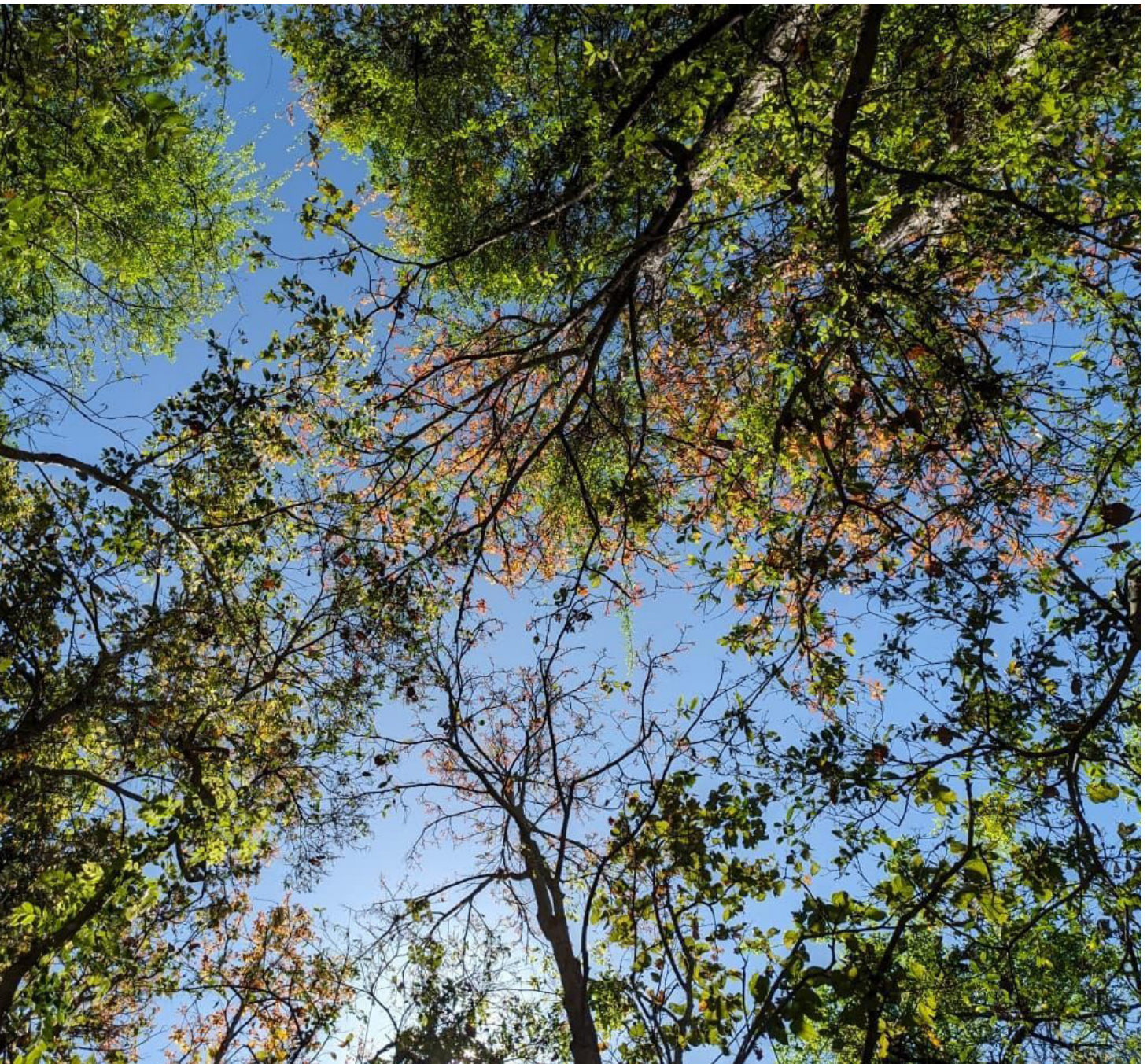
The presence of woody climbers (Lianas) in forest ecosystems is often framed narrowly as an indicator of forest disturbance. However, this perspective presents a paradox. Lianas thrive in forests with high structural heterogeneity, which allows them to exploit an array of forest resources owing to their remarkable adaptive strategies. Although lianas are seen as an indicator of habitat disturbance, their presence should also be quantified in terms of their ecological services. Building on this tension, the following discussion integrates insights from existing literature with field-based observations to explore the ecological role of woody climbers beyond their conventional characterization.

Lianas are flexible, branched woody climbers that originate from the forest floor and use large trees to reach the canopy top for sunlight. Across peninsular India, lianas exhibit an elevational pattern, thriving in lowland evergreen and semi-evergreen forests and declining toward higher elevations due to changes in climatic conditions and forest structure. Their climbing and dispersal strategies mirror the structural and climatic context of each forest type, making them both indicators and influencers of forest ecology. Study show that across evergreen forests, lianas are not evenly distributed instead, they are selective colonizers of trees with specific traits like tall boles (main trunk) and rough bark.

Lianas are pivotal species in forming the structural architecture of a forest affecting regeneration, altering successional trajectories, ecosystem functioning and canopy dynamics. This includes species of lianas that forms a “species oligarchy” (a few dominant species that shape forest composition, and disturbance sensitivity). Liana abundance and structure shift along disturbance gradients; host specificity, such as tree traits (bark texture, branching), strongly influences liana distribution. In functional strategies, twining is the most successful climbing mode, and dispersal modes align with forest openness and faunal presence. Lianas are now becoming climate winners in tropical forests as their high photosynthetic rates, water-use efficiency, and reproductive success under stressed conditions give them a competitive edge, reshaping forest dynamics. However, lianas are not recognised for their ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and sustaining forest biodiversity.

Current understanding on the structural roles of lianas comes from the tropical evergreen forests but their expression in tropical deciduous systems remains under explored. In this context, observations from Mix Sal Forests offer an opportunity to understand how lianas interact with a more seasonal canopy. The interaction between trees and lianas appears not as a constant competitive dominance, but as a seasonally shifting and dynamic. During certain periods, particularly in the dry season, leafless lianas formed dense, tangled networks across canopy gaps, giving the forest a sparse yet structurally complex appearance. With the onset of the growing season, tree canopies flushed, and new liana leaves emerged, altering light availability and competitive interactions. This pattern suggests a form of temporal structuring, where the balance between trees and climbers is mediated through phenology rather than fixed spatial dominance.





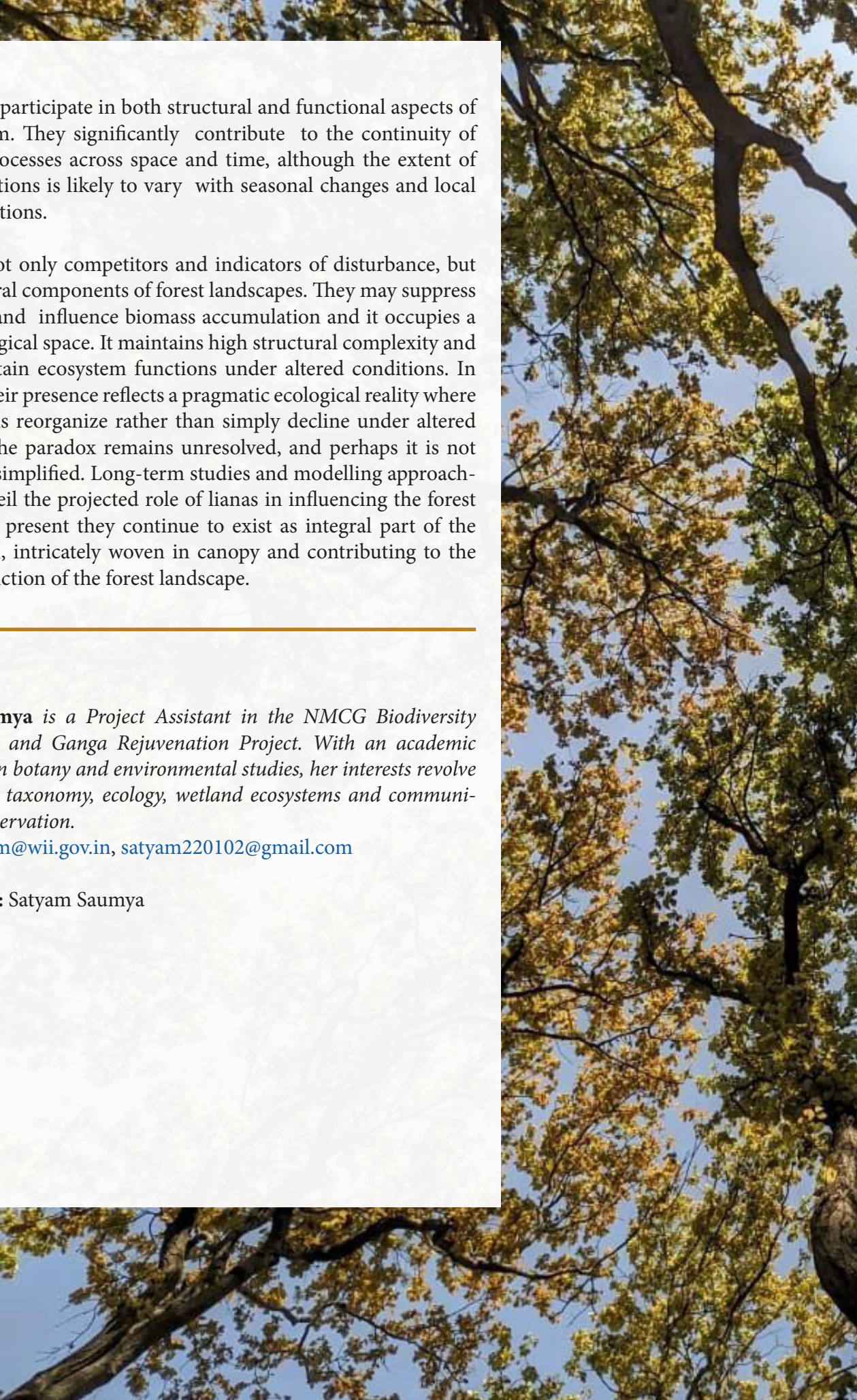
A mixed Sal Forest showing new leaves and climbers moving through the canopy

A full foliage Sal canopy, with understory below

Mixed Sal Forest patches with greater structural complexity and with lianas the forest appears to support higher bird activity levels. Birds were frequently observed utilizing the interconnected canopy and liana networks, particularly in areas where filtered light created heterogeneous microhabitats. However, this pattern may also be influenced by additional factors such as proximity to water bodies and edge conditions.

Lianas, by extending across and sometimes beyond individual tree canopies, contribute to a

more continuous yet layered canopy surface. Their leaves and shoots often occupy spaces that would otherwise remain open, creating additional strata within the forest canopy. These layers could support a range of insects species. This attract insectivorous birds, especially in zones where light and foliage create favourable foraging conditions. The liana foliage, flowers, and fruits serve as critical food resource for various faunal groups. The trophic interactions extend further through seed dispersal, as many liana species rely on animals for the movement of their propagules. This not only aids in their regeneration but also links lianas closely with faunal activity patterns within the forest. As a



result, lianas participate in both structural and functional aspects of the ecosystem. They significantly contribute to the continuity of ecological processes across space and time, although the extent of these interactions is likely to vary with seasonal changes and local habitat conditions.

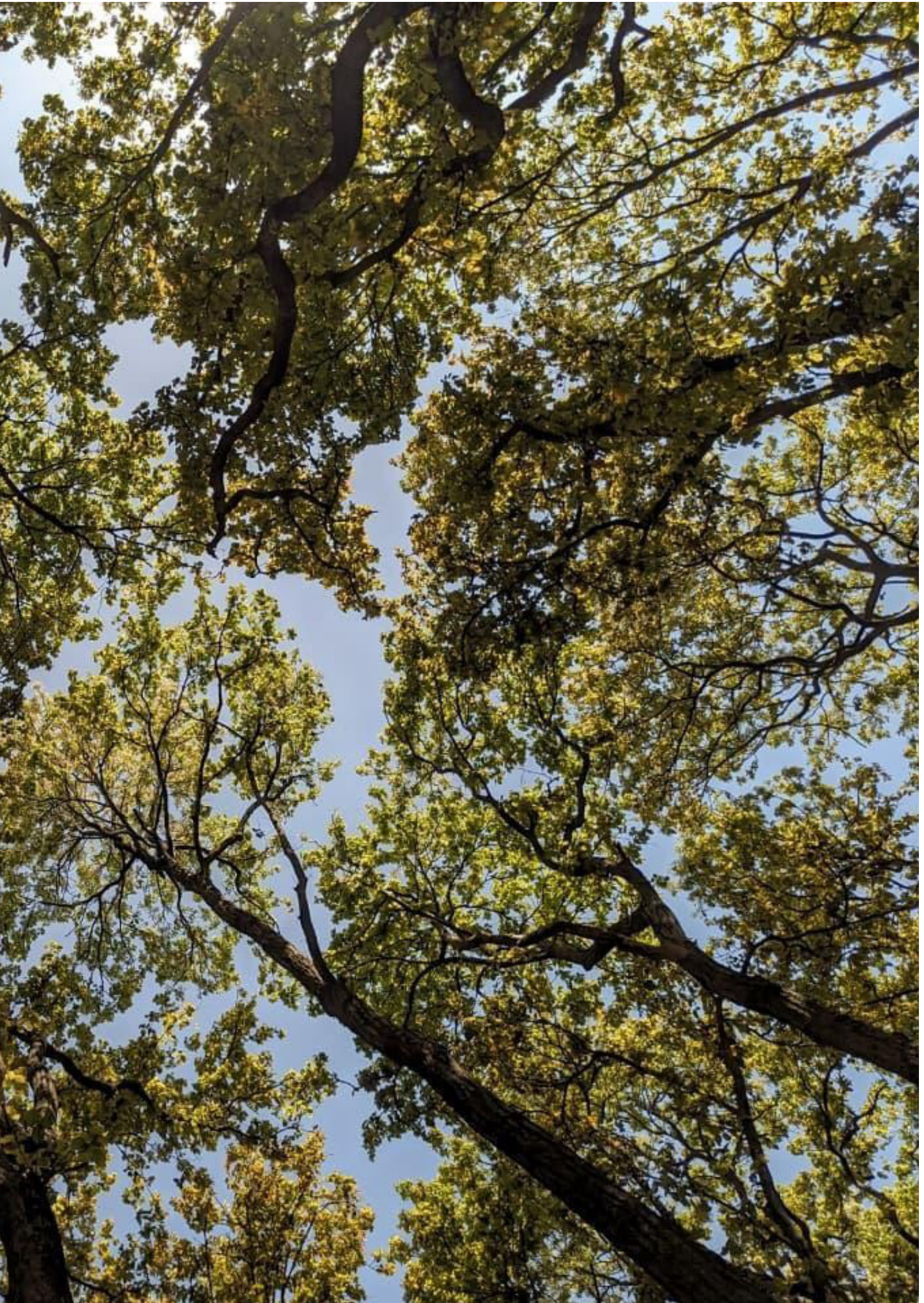
Lianas are not only competitors and indicators of disturbance, but also an integral components of forest landscapes. They may suppress tree growth and influence biomass accumulation and it occupies a unique ecological space. It maintains high structural complexity and supports certain ecosystem functions under altered conditions. In this sense, their presence reflects a pragmatic ecological reality where forest systems reorganize rather than simply decline under altered conditions. The paradox remains unresolved, and perhaps it is not meant to be simplified. Long-term studies and modelling approaches could unveil the projected role of lianas in influencing the forest structure. At present they continue to exist as integral part of the forest system, intricately woven in canopy and contributing to the form and function of the forest landscape.

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Photo credit: Satyam Saumya



Field Biologists on an elusive Owl's trail

- Rohit R.S. Jha & Nonita Rana

Our story starts with a spark of excitement before we even set foot in the dry deciduous forests of the [Satpura-Melghat wildlife corridor](#) landscape. As part of a two-year ecological impact assessment study of a proposed [twin-dam project](#) on the Morand and Ganjal rivers, our study area was primarily spread across Territorial Division forests in Madhya Pradesh's Narmadapuram, Harda, and Betul districts. We were directly responsible for the project's avian component and fervently hoped to spot the [Forest Owlet \(*Athene blewitti*\)](#), Central India's *only* endemic bird species. Thus, we responded enthusiastically in the affirmative when the Principal Investigator asked, "Would we find the bird?"

Our confidence, in retrospect, perhaps even naivety, seemed to stem from the fact that this [endangered](#) species with an extremely spotty/localised distribution – in northern Western Ghats and Central India – was known to [favour](#) Teak-dominated (*Tectona grandis*) woodlands, much like our study landscape: open-to-semi-open canopy, scattered old-growth trees, forest edges interspersed with agriculture. Documenting it here, we thought, could help us spotlight the region's biodiversity. I (RJ/first author) dove deep into available literature, keeping tabs on recent publications and distribution models. He obsessed over the [Forest Owlet's tree-cavity nesting behaviour](#) and other pellet-based [diet](#) studies showing it hunts insects, lizards, and small birds, alongside other sympatric owls. NR (co/second author), meanwhile, was mastering the basics of [identification](#), both visual and aural.

At first glance, the Forest Owlet is a twin to the more common and widespread [Spotted Owlet \(*Athene brama*\)](#), but the devil – in this case, the delight, rather – is in the details! The Forest Owlet, is subtly but distinctly different: a flattened, barely spotted crown, heavily feathered tarsi, a grayish-brown tone with a white belly, and a characteristic, almost compulsive [lateral tail-flick behaviour](#) that no other owlet shares. NR even memorised the Forest Owlet's [territorial/hooting calls](#) to the point of dreaming about them!



Spotted Owlet © P.Jeganathan



Forest Owlet © Saswat Mishra



Jungle Owlet © Hari Patibanda

A collage of sympatric owlets – spotted, forest and jungle – found in the study area's dry deciduous forests; notice the Forest Owlet's flattened & barely spotted crown, heavily feathered tarsi, and an overall grayish-brown tone with a white belly – characters that help differentiate it in the field from other owlets (Photos: as attributed above; reproduced under CCA 2.0 License).



Available studies suggest that Forest Owlet typically inhabit Teak-dominated dry deciduous forests – as above in our study area – interspersed by crop fields with scattered trees
(Photo: Rohit R.S. Jha).

Owl-some story of Lost and Found

On the 25th of November 1997, three American ornithologists – Pamela Rasmussen, Ben King, and David Abbott – stepped into the dry deciduous scrub near Shahada in Maharashtra’s Nandurbar district and found something most ornithologists of their generation had given up hope on: they *rediscovered* the Forest Owlet, alive and well, perched on a leafless tree. The bird had not been reliably recorded for 113 years prior, hence had been presumed extinct! The story of how earlier searches had repeatedly failed – partly because a *stolen museum specimen* had been re-labelled with a fabricated locality, sending expeditions on a wild goose chase – only added to the intrigue surrounding this rather small, unassuming bird. The prospect of encountering this rare species in our study landscape was genuinely exciting.

Eyes & Ears on high alert

Throughout the 12-month fieldwork cycle (April 2025 to March 2026, with a brief monsoon break), Forest Owlet detection remained an integral part of our broader bird diversity documentation effort – ears and eyes kept open during point counts,

transect walks, and the long hours in-transit. The breeding season, roughly October to May, was understood to be the best window for detection. Forest Owlets are most vocal and responsive to call playback during courtship and territory establishment, particularly from January through February. We planned a dedicated mini-study for November-February, with playback surveys at pre-selected likely sites. That plan, alas, was partially shelved under the weight of other commitments, but we did manage a handful of dedicated searches.

NR also tried utilising the knowledge of our local *field collaborators*. Between point count stations, walking with them, she would ask about ‘chhota ullu’ – the small owlet – playing recordings of multiple owlet species and asking them to identify what they had heard in the forest. Lallu *bhaiya* from Tanda, Nirvey ji from Budhimai, and Har Narayan ji from Khoomi all demonstrated a surprisingly nuanced ear. A couple of them believed they had heard something like the Forest Owlet’s call from forest edges near water bodies – a curious factoid, given that proximity to water is not prominently emphasised in the published literature. Whether it was confirmation bias, genuine recall, or simply a willingness to please, we cannot say

with certainty. But as NR put it: “*They know their forests better than us. I was inclined to believe them*”.

The ‘near misses’? Resignation and desperation!

NR had her heart race over a distant grey silhouette in a snag near Budhimai hills – it perched, then vanished into the woods before her camera could focus. Close calls like that kept optimism alive.

Similarly, on a chilly late January morning before beginning a long trail in a remote corner of our study area – with relatively denser forest, older-growth trees – I (RJ) asked junior colleagues Rakshith Gowda and Arti Adhikari to check every owlet encountered closely. Rakshith, leading on the trail, spotted one, snapped a photo, and signalled silently. I was following closely behind, my pulse hammered as I raised binoculars – the bird was motionless and silent at first, head facing the opposite direction. In the next few seconds, as it spotted me, its head turned a full 180 degrees, it spotted me and let out a loud burst of hollow trills, “*kaaaooo-kaaaaooo-kah-ow!*” – [Jungle Owlet \(*Glaucidium radiatum*\)](#), after all. As it flew away, my heart sank. “If not here”, I muttered to myself, “*maybe nowhere else in the study area either*”, resignation starting to creep in.

Our field schedule was coming to an end, and the prospect of returning to Dehradun without catching even so far as a glimpse of the Forest Owlet loomed large. One late afternoon, fuelled by desperation, we drove roughly 60 kilometres outside the study area, to a forested tract called Chunalohma, near Betul, from where a relatively recent [record](#) existed on eBird. We played its territorial and other calls along forest- agriculture edges, but [zilch](#) there too. It did confirm the similarity: open deciduous woodland with interspersed crop field seemed exactly its niche! The habitat being right but the bird absent is, as any field ornithologist will recognise, entirely normal but also quietly maddening.

Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence

We returned to Dehradun in March 2026 without a Forest Owlet record, but with a richer sense of the landscape and its possibilities. The species remains poorly known in non-PA forests, where it faces the [compounded pressures](#) of illegal logging, grazing, pesticide and rodenticide use, and forest fragmentation. Unlike tigers or leopards, this diminutive owl attracts little public attention or institutional protection *outside* PAs. The Satpura-Melghat corridor’s multiple-use forests are precisely the kind of unprotected matrix habitats where its presence or absence could be ecologically and legally significant, especially in the context of developmental infrastructure projects.





As secondary cavity nesters, the Forest Owlet depends entirely on pre-existing tree cavities and tree hollows created by birds such as woodpeckers (as depicted above), barbets, etc. for nesting, roosting, and caching prey; the availability of suitable cavities, hence, is a key limiting factor for their population. The removal of old-growth trees in forestry operations and timber logging (particularly illegal teak felling) directly contributes towards elimination of nesting sites (Photos: Nonita Rana).

There is a real possibility that the species occurs in our study landscape, or nearby, in small numbers and without being detected by standard survey methods alone. Absence of evidence, as the ecologist's adage goes, is *not* evidence of absence.

An empty-handed quest? Hope lives on

Field research is, in large part, a practice in managing expectations. One carries a mental list of *hoped-for* species into every field season. Many of them do not materialise – not because the landscape lacks them, but because time, effort, and chance conspire in their own complex ways. The Forest Owlet, as of now, stays on our unseen list. But we hope that somewhere in those warm, rustling

Teak forests between the Morand and the Ganjal rivers, on a dead snag, or at the cavity entrance of an old *Dhawada tree* (*Terminalia anogeissiana*), there may well be a small, flat-headed, *tail-flicking* owlet that we simply failed to find.

Our empty-handed quest? That is fieldwork's heartbeat – thrill of possibility/search, disappointment with absence, lessons in humility. No sighting, sure, but we returned with fond memories of the quest itself, sharper eyes for owls ahead, and along the way documented 200+ bird species in the study area! We are now driven to protect these forests before rarities like the Forest Owlet slip further away.



Authors of this article (left: RJ, right: NR) with field collaborator Sh. Gulab Batre (middle) during their routine field surveys, seemingly exemplifying the idiom, “A smiling face does not mean that the person experiences no pain; it simply means that they know how to deal with their troubles”, more famously uttered in Punjabi by actor Gurpreet Ghuggi (Photo: Rohit R.S. Jha).

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The authors thank Meghna Limboo and Manisha Mathela for a quick read/review of the draft article.



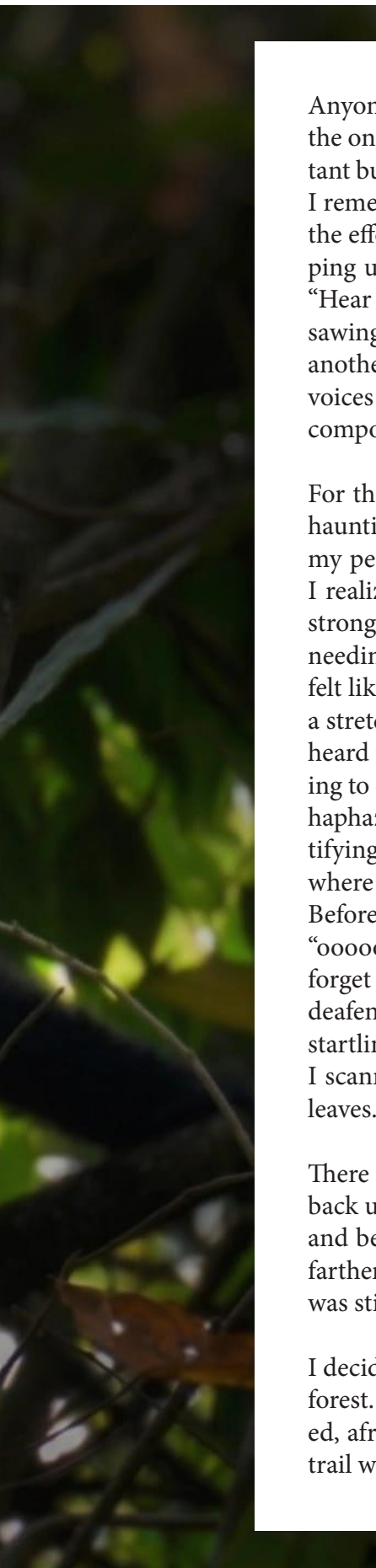
Photo credit: Shrabasti Majumdar

Sweat, Tears, and Very Loud Monkeys

- Sumedha Touhid



Western Hoolock Gibbon at Balpakram National Park, South Garo Hills, Meghalaya



Anyone who has visited the Garo Hills in Meghalaya is familiar with the echoes of the only ape of India. My very first time it sounded close to a celestial siren, very distant but shrill, resonating through the forest, travelling across kilometres to reach us. I remember how slowly I walked through the trail at Balpakram National Park, how the effort had drenched my t-shirt, forcing me to stop and keep the forest from slipping underneath me. While I chugged my water, one of my teammates whispered, “Hear that? Hoolock gibbons!” I didn’t recognize what it was. Amidst the rhythmic sawing of cicadas and the metallic ring of locusts, I might have dismissed it as just another pulse of the insect choir. But then it clarified: a haunting, melodic orison, voices that rose and lingered, that trembled and carried, that sounded as if it were composed specifically to summon the gods.

For three months, not a week passed without that song, but it was always a distant haunting echo bouncing off the emerald canopy to reach me. It was the final day of my penultimate week in Balpakram. As I headed out to monitor my camera traps, I realized how much the forest had changed me over the last three months. “I am stronger now!” My legs didn’t tire as easily, and I could walk much faster without needing to halt for air. The three-kilometer hike, which used to leave me exhausted, felt like nothing at all, even as the winter had begun to take its leave. After finishing a stretch of the trail, I came to a small clearing at the edge of the forest. I paused as I heard the calls of several different birds and quickly reached for my camera, preparing to capture whatever I could. The calls were loud and overlapping, blending into a haphazard chorus that excited me at the prospect of capturing unique species. Identifying the source of the sound, I focused on a small tree at the edge of the canopy, where I could make out subtle movements of shifting leaves and trembling branches. Before I could take a picture, I heard the sirens again - a long, melodramatic “ooooo-oh, ooooo-oh, oooo-oh...” that brought me to a sudden halt and made me forget whatever I had been about to do. This was unlike any other day. The calls were deafening, sharper and more intense than I had ever heard them, and they seemed startlingly close. With my camera now trained in the direction of the dense forest, I scanned the canopy, searching for even the faintest hint of movement among the leaves.

There was a steep drop just ahead of where I stood, but I couldn’t manage to climb back up if I needed to. Still, I’ve always had an awful sense of direction in the forest, and being alone made me unwilling to risk getting lost. I took a few cautious steps farther in, hoping to catch a better view, but no matter how intently I looked, there was still nothing to see.

I decided to walk farther ahead, hoping to find a clearer trail that led deeper into the forest. I attempted to venture farther in a few more times, but each time I hesitated, afraid I might not be able to find my way back. By the time I reached the inner trail where I had earlier set up my camera trap, I had almost given up on the pursuit.

I stepped onto the path and walked in, the calls still reverberating all around me, so close that they seemed to brush against my ears, yet the creatures producing them remained completely hidden from view.

I continued along the trail, deciding to pause one last time to scan the surroundings. With my camera held ready and my phone recording the surrounding audio, I searched the trees with intense focus. The heat that afternoon was unforgiving; sweat pooled on my forehead and my glasses began to fog over, blurring my vision.

Despite the discomfort, I kept the recording running, and suddenly, the forest went quiet. The loud calls had stopped. About fifty feet ahead, the stillness was broken by a rustle in the undergrowth. I adjusted my lens, zooming in on the patch of shaking leaves, and there they were: dark, powerful limbs moving through the foliage, finally visible and clear in my sights.

The eyepiece of my camera fogged over from the heat of my face, forcing me to pull it away to clear the lens. Just as I did, the calls erupted once more, shattering the silence. Then, to my absolute disbelief and soaring excitement, two hoolock gibbons appeared, as clear as day itself. They began to swing from branch to branch, maneuvering through the high canopy with a liquid, effortless grace. Their long limbs moved in perfect synchronization as they crossed directly over the trail where I stood.

I was completely dumbfounded. The camera hung forgotten in my hands; I simply stood there, jaw nearly touching the leaf litter on the forest floor, experiencing a level of pure happiness I had never known in my entire life. When they reached the other side of the path, they settled into the thick foliage, their loud songs fading into soft, rhythmic grunts. From their perch on the branches, they looked back at me, watching with curious eyes. After a few moments, one of them dived deeper into the green and vanished, while the other lingered just long enough for me to finally find my composure and snap a single photograph.

As they disappeared into the vast forest, a strange coolness touched my cheeks. It was only then that I realized that the moisture on my face was no longer just sweat, but tears.



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Balpakram National Park, South Garo Hills, Meghalaya (Helipad trail)

First Touch of a Wild Sentient: *Adrenaline Rush and Feeling of Being Alive*

- Dr Rashmi Ranjan Swain & Shri A Prabhanjan Reddy

They tell you in the lecture halls of the academy that, “a forest officer is a manager of landscapes, a guardian of legal boundaries, and a scholar of ecological data”. But the truth is, all the textbooks in the world can’t do justice when one faces the real world of wild animals with a syringe projector in one’s hands and the life of a living, breathing predator on one’s conscience. An intriguing experience that we felt during the Post Graduate Diploma Course Techniques tour. We had the opportunity to get hands-on experience in immobilizing a wild predator, the leopard held at the Wildlife Transit Rehabilitation Centre (WTRC), Chidiyapur, Haridwar Forest Division, Uttarakhand.

The transition from theory to reality began with a mock drill on 13th December 2025 to handle remote drug delivery systems. Dr. Parag Nigam, a man whose quiet authority seemed to mirror the stillness of the woods, gathered us for the final practice. We were officer trainees, confident in our academic standing, yet as we took turns with the blowpipe and the dart gun, we realized how little we knew of the crucial link between biology and physics. Every time one of us missed the target, the stakes felt higher. It was only when Dr Nigam took his position, his chest barely moving as he mastered his own pulse, that we saw the dart land with precision. He looked at us and said something that would haunt my sleep that night: “In the field, it is your breath that decides whether the animal is helped or harmed.”

The Approach: Amber Eyes and Accelerated Hearts

The morning of December 14th arrived with a cool, overcast sky that seemed to press down on the forest of Laldhang. Our team reached WTRC just before noon, when the air was calm with the scent of damp earth. As we moved towards the leopard

enclosures, the atmosphere shifted from academic curiosity to a sharp, electric tension. We walked past the enclosures of four male leopards, but it was one selected male that caught our attention. Powerfully built, roughly four years old, and weighing about 60 kilograms, he stood apart from the others. His amber eyes didn’t just see us; they calculated us. He paced the length of his cage with a rhythmic, predatory grace, his low growls vibrating through the soles of our boots. We felt our heart rates accelerating without permission, with every beat feeling like a drum beating against the ribs that no amount of training or meditation could suppress. It was that special moment when one really feels the heart and lungs are functional. We looked at our colleagues, Apurv, Shreyas, Tarun, and a few others. Together we all witnessed the same curious yet tense glance. The only barrier between us and the animal were the strong bars that gave us some respite and confidence, though we knew that the distance could be bridged in less than a second.

The Seven-Minute Silence

The protocol began with a silence so profound that it felt like the forest itself was holding its breath. The cage was covered on the sides using straws that acted as a physical visual barrier to minimize stress. At 1315h, the animal was darted with a combination of Xylazine and Ketamine delivered through nylon darts fired from a DanInject JMSP syringe projector with a short barrel length. We watched, everyone from a distance, as still as a frozen lake, as the dart found its mark in the leopard’s right thigh. The animal noticed the prick of the dart with a sharp turn of the head, but then the waiting began, one of the longest seven minutes of our professional lives. At 1320h, the action of



ketamine was evident with stimulation of the emetic centre, with the animal trying to retch, indicating the onset of drug action. By 1325h, the leopard's consciousness bowed to the chemistry of the compounds in the dart and the head was observed to be resting. Even then, we did not rush. Only after ensuring that the leopard did not respond to stimuli on the tail tip, ear pinna and the whiskers, the animal was approached. Finally, the cage door was opened and marked the rendezvous with the wild sentient. We stepped into the cage with the leopard beside us and the weight of the silence now heavy with the gravity of what we were about to do. Someone whispered what are we going to do if he wakes up now and the answer was as simple as that whatever would be done will be done by the leopard. But we were confident with our protocol, and the process went smoothly.

The First Touch

Stepping into that cage felt like crossing an invisible threshold between the two worlds. Our task alongside Apurv, Shreyas, and Shubham was to position the head in a manner that any oral discharges, if any do not flow back. The jaw relaxation was also a good indicator of the level of sedation. The moment our hands contacted the animal's body, the world outside the cage came to a halt. The leopard was then blindfolded. For many of us, this was the first time we were touching a predator from the

wilderness. Though we expected the fur to feel coarse, like a rug "at least in theory" but it was smooth and carried the warmth of a living thing. In that contact, the "specimen" became a life. The animal was shifted onto the transportation rug and moved outside onto the digital platform for weighing. The animal weighed 54.4 kg.

Subsequently, the leopard was carried onto the examination table. Once on the table, other teams responsible for positioning, monitoring and biological sampling started their tasks. The team began the meticulous process of recording the body measurements. With the neck girth of 58 cm, chest girth of 86 cm, and a shoulder height of 66 cm, the animal was an adult. Inspection of the mouth was undertaken. The animal had a chipped left upper canine, with the mandibular and maxillary canines measuring 43 mm and 39 mm, indicating his past struggles in the wild. Another team monitored the vital parameters with constant vigilance. Temperature was maintained at 102.6°F, respiration ranged between 18 to 24 breaths per minute, and the cardiac functions were obvious with rosy pink mucous membranes. The monitoring parameters were essential as a sudden drop in any of these could pose an emergency. Yet, amidst this tension and hurry of data collection, there were moments of pure, unadulterated awe that we were in such close vicinity of the leopard. The most transformative discovery came when the paws were lifted. The

pads were not the leathery, scarred things that we imagined; they were quite soft. It was then that we noticed the lethal power of the ivory-colored retractile claws hidden just millimetres away from this delicate, tender underside. Passing those claws from hand to hand was a lesson in nature's engineering that no photograph could ever convey.

Nine Minutes to Wakefulness

As the clock neared 1400h, the atmosphere tightened again. The sampling was done, the measurements recorded, and it was time to return the animal to the cage. The animal was moved back into the cage, while supporting the head. The blindfolds were removed. At 1403h, the reversal agent, Atipamezole, was administered into his left thigh, and we all moved back behind the safety of the bars. Then began the final wait. At 1405 h, breathing quickened, and by 1406h, a whisker twitched, indicating the first sign of consciousness returning. This was followed by blinking of the eyes and raising of the head. At 1410h, a low growl vibrated through the cage, the first sound indicating that the leopard had reclaimed his cage. By 1412h, the animal was on his feet, alert and reactive, the "living shadow" once again whole and unaware of the memory of our touch.

The Takeaway

While our entry into Chidiyapur was defined by the academic 'how' of the trade, our exit was defined by the clarity of a forest officer—realizing that every technical action is a heartbeat in the larger life of the wild. One can read a hundred books on conservation, but truly learn the value of wildlife as one feels the life of a being. We walked away from the centre that day changed, carrying with us the quiet, heavy honour of having been entrusted with a life that doesn't belong to us, but to the forest we serve. No amount of ink could capture the raw reality of the encounter; it was a vivid reminder that the forest is less of a coordinate on a map and more of a rhythmic, beating heart.

We would like to thank the faculty Dr Parag Nigam, Dr Tapendra Saini, Dr Karan Jain (Scientist, Dept. of Wildlife Health Management, WII) and Dr Amit Dhyani (Sr. Veterinary Officer, WTRC, Chidiyapur) for the guidance in capture and handling of leopards.

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Ten Days, Fifteen Journeys, One Shared Passion

- Sukriti Singh, Gautam Dangi

Fifteen of us were sitting in the *Harmony* Classroom at Category - 2 Centre of Wildlife Institute of India (WII). *Harmony* with its huge windows offers a view of the surrounding vegetation and let in the sounds of numerous birds like the Gray Treepie and Jungle Babblers. The desks carried our names and some handy tools: notepads and pens for diligent note-making, ID cards and, a cap carrying a lovely illustration of a deer along with WII's logo, to protect us from the sun. We had been assigned desk partners and all of us shared a curiosity regarding whether these pairings were random or based on some smart decisions on behalf of the faculty. Little did we know that it was only the beginning of a wild ride that our curiosity would be undertaking in the days to come.

Coming together

Our humble group made the 10th batch of the 'Course on Wildlife Conservation for Wildlife Enthusiasts' offered by WII for anyone who carried passion for the natural world and wanted to learn more about it. It was an interesting collection – consisting of students, creatives, professionals from the world of tech, commerce, medicine, humanities, and even some who had retired from their original professions to give time to the call of the wild. Our intrigue and an eagerness to learn was what united us.

Our exciting timetable consisted of four days of classroom interactions, interspersed with six days in the field – one day spent trekking in Benog Wildlife Sanctuary, Mussoorie and the other five walking through Lansdowne Forest Division of the Rajaji Tiger Reserve.

Before our first formal interaction, many of us had already met while birdwatching on the nature trail near the lovely lake of WII campus. Being inside the campus meant forgetting you are in the hustling, bustling city of Dehradun, which nestles in the foothills of the Himalayas, amongst the slopes of the Shivalik range of Uttarakhand. A beautiful space with timeless architecture and greenery that overwhelms your heart, the WII campus is home not only to researchers, scientists and a stellar faculty, but also to many birds and animals. One was woken up by the calls of the hornbills, kingfishers and ducks and went to sleep hearing the owls and the jackals. None of us knew how we would be convinced to leave this haven.





Guided by Inspiring Mentors

Days spent at the campus were scheduled with lectures conducted by the inspiring faculty at WII. Our course director, Dr. Suresh Kumar introduced us to zoogeography and biodiversity hotspots. Guest lecturer Shri VK Uniyal spoke to us on the Ethos of Wildlife Conservation. Dr. J.A Johnson shared details of Mahseer conservation and river monitoring. Ms. Chinmaya Ghanekar brought us closer to the world of marine ecosystems and Dugong conservation. Dr. Abhijit Das spoke on covert species like reptiles and amphibians. Dr. Shivani Barthwal explained to us the relevance of River Ganga. Dr. Nehru Prabhakaran transported us to the mystical world of the Andaman and Nicobar islands.

There was more: Dr. Salvador Lyngdoh increased our understanding of the wildlife of the Himalayas. Dr. Amrjeet Kaur, the associate course director shared sweet anecdotes from her time studying the barn swallows and their nesting habits. Mr. Varun Kher introduced us to India's arid grasslands. Dr. Ashish Jha talked to us about Citizen science and its importance in urban ecosystems. Dr. SK Gupta opened the intriguing world of wildlife forensics, put together with an enriching lab visit. Later, Dr. Suresh returned with his beautiful accounts on the Amur Falcons and Dr. Vishnupriya Kolipakam discussed the future of the Ganges river dolphin. Dr. Bilal Habib dealt with the difficult topic of Infrastructure projects being implemented sustainably and Dr. Parag Nigam spoke on Management of Wild Animals in Distress which was followed by a presentation by his teammates, showing us tranquilisers and immobilisation techniques.

Classes were enriching to say the least. The faculty's teachings were made richer by stories from the field - from years of research and from lived experiences that animated the natural world in front of us. Concepts that once felt complex became simple and meaningful. These sessions were after all spirited discussions with some of India's leading wildlife scientists. Our enthusiastic questions were welcomed and many doubts that we had carried for years began to find clarity.



Trekking in Benog

Our time in Benog was like a preparatory trek for the field days that were to follow. We spent a day walking through the forest, listening to birds and looking at the vegetation. Accompanied by Dr. Suresh and Dr. Amarjeet, all of us were directed towards the right kind of questions: Why does this tree grow here? What bird eats this fruit? Is this a man-made track or an animal track?

The day in Benog was an intimate introduction to the habitat. On a downhill trek of 7kms, we were in a forest that used to be a crucial habitat for the Himalayan Quail, which is now feared extinct. Situated at about 2000 m, in the Pine and Oak forest, the jungle is home to numerous species of birds, leopards and bears. Many of us transformed into avid birdwatchers on this day as we learned how to correctly use binoculars and a field guide to locate the bird we are seeing or hearing. There were other signs to look for too, like, remains of a kill, scat of leopards and of barking deer.

Downhill, we were greeted by a freshwater stream where we quenched our thirsts while keeping an eye out for fork-tails that might be around. One would think our sunny trek would have exhausted us, but our questions only doubled and our bus ride back to campus was busy with enlightening conversations with Dr. Suresh.

Walking in Elephant country

The latter half of the course consisted of the field trip, for which we were headed to Kotdwar, to Saneh Forest Rest House, to spend five days walking on 'Champion's trail', the same trail that was frequented by pioneering conservationist and photographer F.W. Champion, when he worked in the Lansdowne Forest Division in colonial India. From Saneh, we walked 10 kms through dense forest and multiple river crossings to Kolhu Rest House. This was true Elephant country, where tigers roamed silently, leopards stalked prey and bears, sloth bears and black bears foraged. Equipped with our binoculars and notepads to record as much as we could, our group followed Dr. Suresh and Dr. Amarjeet into the jungle, guided by Ammu and Ammi bhaiya.



Our guidelines were particular - stay quiet, observe and continue walking until signalled to stop. But awestruck by the views in front of us we truly had to fight an urge to stop every few minutes. So many sights to behold! Golden mahseer swam in the turquoise waters and curious langurs peeked at us. We lost count of the birds too, Kalij Pheasant, Wallcreeper, Common Merganser, Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Crested Kingfisher, Mountain Hawk-Eagle, Plum-headed Parakeet in addition to the Vulnerable Great Slaty Woodpecker and Endangered Pallas's Fish- Eagle.

In addition to the wildlife, we also learnt a lot about the plants. Dr. Suresh helped us make connections with what we had talked about in class and apply it in the field. After spending a night in Kolhu FRH, we carried on the next day to Chaukhamb, which was higher up and closer to the ridgeline that existed between Lansdowne Forest Division and Sona Nadi Wildlife Sanctuary. On the third day, before returning to Kolhu, despite our blisters, we undertook the trek up to the ridgeline that overlooked Ramganga Reservoir. Spending the fourth day birding in Kolhu Chaur, the grassland in the middle of this forest, the fifth day we began our walk back from Kolhu to Saneh.

We had spent wholesome days, understanding what it means to walk in a forest, eating simple meals on the broad leaves of the forest and having rich sessions of stories that Dr. Suresh and Dr. Amarjeet shared with us each night. It was not easy sleeping in the forest, not because we were away from our city beds, but because the night too rang with the calls of Large-tailed Nightjar, Indian Scops-Owl and deer suspicious of predators, which intrigued us all.

There were multiple moments in the forest when Dr. Suresh exclaimed how lucky our group was. Not only had we been blessed by beautiful sightings of wild elephants twice, we had also seen a Barking Deer, a Goral, a Burmese Rock Python, mixed hunting flocks of birds, Critically Endangered Red-headed Vulture and Black Storks using thermal columns.

Once to hurry us, Dr. Suresh asked us to walk briskly. Many of us asked why we were running to which Mr. Vijay, a course participant, said how we will never get to run through a forest like this, so instead of asking why, we should enjoy the moment and just run! This truly encapsulated the freeing feeling of being deep inside the forest, away from the modern world.

On our way back we also made a brief stop at Jhilmil Jheel Conservation Reserve, making connections with our time interacting with the Vann Gujars who once resided inside the Lansdowne forest. We realised how conservation cannot be separated from human lives, and how it is delicate because there is no right or wrong side, only a wish to live freely, where one belongs.



Learning from Each Other

What made our experiences more special was how naturally we came together as a group. In addition to discussing during class, we had been having conversations over tea, on walks around campus, into the night and in the field. There was a genuine openness to listen and to learn from each other. Different viewpoints did not divide us; instead, they enriched our understanding. A botanist would notice details that others might miss. A trekker would bring in field insights. A designer would think about communication and interpretation. Slowly, we began to see wildlife not just as a subject, but as a vast, interconnected world that could be understood in many ways.

A Shift in Perspective and a Shared Direction

The course not only gave us precious knowledge, but also something more important – a shift in perspective. We began to see wildlife with greater sensitivity and responsibility. It was no longer solely about identifying species or understanding behaviour. It was about recognising our role as individuals in a larger ecosystem, and the impact our actions had. Protima Singh, a humanitarian professional in our group, said, “The field trip was the heart of it all; it reconnected me deeply with nature and wildlife. As a telepathic animal communicator where I keep connected to the natural world, this course gave me a whole new lens—to see the science, the challenges, and the quiet, relentless efforts behind conservation. I leave humbled with deeper awareness, respect, and a renewed sense of responsibility.”

The thoughtful design of the course which combined classroom lectures, lab visits, and field experiences, added a new layer to our understanding. In the labs, we saw the science of wildlife research. In the field, we experienced unpredictability and beauty of nature. In the classroom, we reflected, questioned, and connected ideas.

The Wildlife Enthusiasts Course had brought together fifteen individuals with different journeys. But it gave us a shared direction – to understand, appreciate, and speak for wildlife with greater care. As the ten days came to an end, it was clear that each one of us would take back something unique. For some, it may influence their professional work, for others, it may shape how they engage with nature in their daily lives. The learning was to continue in different ways, in different contexts. However, our goals became aligned.

In many ways, the course did not end on the tenth day. It continues through us – in how we observe, how we speak about wildlife, and how we share what we have learnt with others. And that, perhaps, is the best outcome of all.





Authors:

Gautam Dangi is a communication designer and founder of Green Design, specialising in nature and wildlife interpretation. An alumnus of NID, he has worked with multiple wildlife reserves and zoos across India. His work focuses on developing meaningful interpretive experiences in zoos, nature parks, and visitor centres that enhance public understanding of biodiversity and conservation, while instilling interest in wildlife.

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Sukriti Singh is a photo researcher at Roundglass Sustain, an organisation devoted to telling stories of wild India. A visual storyteller, she uses photography to connect to broader social and environmental issues. She aims to employ her skills as a tool for conservation.

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The Stillness I Travelled Through: A *Tehri Reflection*

- Kumari Babli

Sometimes we become so fluent in examples that they turn into habits. During my master's studies, almost every discussion on land degradation or environmental exploitation somehow found its way to one familiar reference: Tehri Dam. It became almost humorous: my go-to case study. But recently, that textbook example transformed into a lived experience.

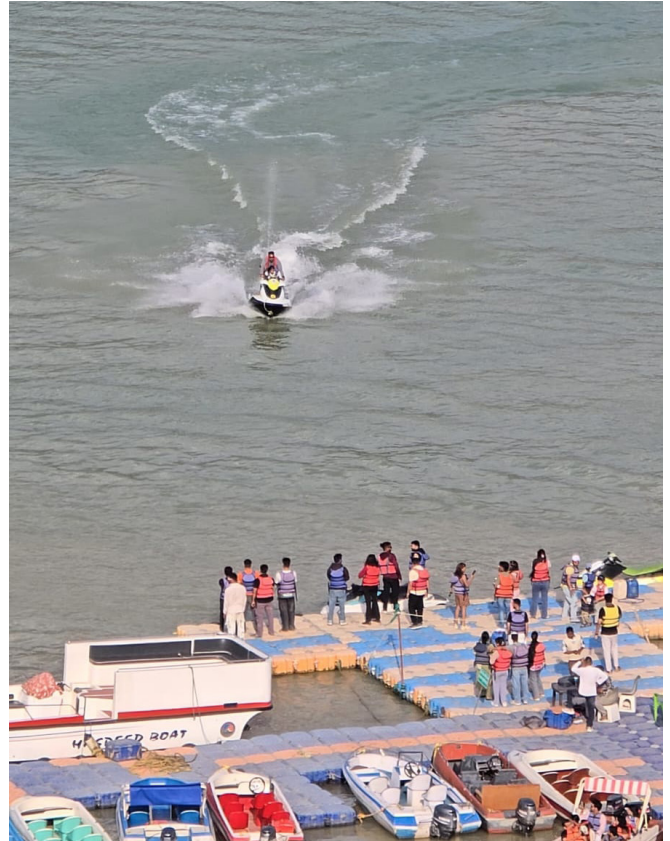
The journey begins from Dehradun, moving to the confluence at Devprayag, where the Bhagirathi meets the Alaknanda to form the river Ganga. As we moved higher into the mountains, the landscape shifted—urban chaos dissolved into silence, and the river began to feel less like a concept and more like a presence.

One of the most memorable places was Chandrabadni Temple, situated at **2,277 meters** above sea level. A short 1-km trek led us to the temple, where the air felt fresh and the horizon opened up to snow-covered Himalayan peaks. The temple is deeply rooted in local beliefs and mythologies. From Chandrabadni Temple to Tehri Dam, the distance is approximately **35–40 km** by road. And then, there it was, the Tehri Dam itself. Massive, still, and almost surreal. Built at the confluence of the Bhagirathi River and Bhilangana River near Old Tehri, the dam stands as one of India's tallest and most controversial engineering feats. But this stillness has another side. What once might have been a quiet, submerged valley is now a hub of activity. Jet skiing, banana boat rides, speedboats slicing through water, kayaking, and zorbing. These activities have opened new economic avenues for local communities, providing employment, boosting tourism, and creating alternative livelihoods in a region that once depended heavily on traditional practices.



Yet, this transformation raises an important question: at what cost?

The same waters that reflect the sky now echo with engines. The fragile mountain ecosystem—already vulnerable due to dam construction—faces additional pressure from tourism infrastructure and waste generation. Shorelines are altered, noise disrupts the serenity, and the balance between development and conservation becomes increasingly delicate. It is a classic example of “how economic upliftment and environmental degradation often walk hand in hand”. This journey taught me something beyond textbooks. It reminded me that environmental issues are never black and white. They exist in layers of livelihood, culture, ecology, and aspiration. Tehri is not just a case study of land degradation or environmental exploitation; it is a story of trade-offs, of human ambition, and of nature adapting—sometimes silently, sometimes not. And perhaps that’s why the stillness of Tehri felt so profound. Because beneath it lies a conversation we are yet to fully understand.



Author:

Kumari Babli is a Project Assistant in the Nature Interpretation and Education Component. Her work involves designing educational materials, conducting field visits, and video editing to enhance nature interpretation and awareness. Passionate about creative endeavours, she is dedicated to making conservation education engaging and impactful.



A Celebration of Youth, Water, and Conservation

- Alankrita Sharma

The celebration of World Water Day came to life as a confluence of young minds and passionate change makers shared sense of hope and responsibility towards our rivers. . The event held at the Wildlife Institute of India in collaboration with Nature Science Initiative brought together 10 schools and nearly 90 enthusiastic students and teachers all united by a common vision of conservation.

On this occasion Earthian Uttarakhand Awards were presented to the Bal Ganga Prahari Schools celebrating their dedicated efforts towards protecting nature. Students showcased their ideas through creative models and posters reflecting both awareness and innovation. A nukkad natak on waste management added a strong message while the game based learning activities kept the session interactive and engaging. A truly inspiring moment was the recognition of young birder Jiya Kathayat, a Cornell Lab of Ornithology Young Birder Fellow whose journey highlighted the impact of youth in conservation. The event reflected how awareness when combined with participation can shape responsible action for the future of our rivers.

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Alankrita Sharma is working as a Project Associate-II with Wildlife Institute of India under the NMCG project, working on capacity building and conservation education. Her work focuses on engaging diverse stakeholders in the conservation of riverine biodiversity.

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A Decade of Excellence: *Wildlife Institute of India Builds Global Capacities in Wildlife Health at the 11th Interventions in Wild Animal Health (IWAH) Field Course*

- Dr. Parag Nigam

Against the backdrop of the majestic Aravalli Range, the Sariska Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan recently served as the setting for a significant milestone in global wildlife conservation medicine. From 9th to 27th February 2026, the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) successfully hosted the 11th edition of the field course: Interventions in Wild Animal Health (IWAH). This year was particularly important as it marked a full decade since the programme's inception, further strengthening its position as a premier training opportunity for wildlife health professionals worldwide. Continuing its mission to build global capacity in wildlife health, the 2026 course offered an immersive, hands-on experience in the wilderness of Sariska Tiger Reserve, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and the reality of field-based interventions. The course welcomed 22 participants (all qualified vets) from 10 different countries, a truly international classroom in the heart of the wild. This year's participants travelled from across India, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Kenya, Rwanda, the United States, Colombia, Brazil, the United Kingdom, and Australia, bringing with them a wealth of perspectives and regional expertise. This multicultural exchange was further enriched by the presence of 16 expert tutors from around the globe. The interaction among such a diverse group of professionals enabled a unique exchange of ideas, addressing the many wildlife health challenges now faced across the globe.



Central to the enduring success of the IWAH course is the robust international collaboration behind it, which is known as the Wildlife Health Bridge. This partnership brings together a number of world-renowned institutions: WII, Zoological Society of London (ZSL), The Royal Veterinary College, London, The University of Edinburgh (UoE), The University of Melbourne (UoM), Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Wildlife Research and Training Institute (WRTI), Kenya. The global experience from these world-renowned institutions, combined with the regional expertise of WII, makes the curriculum of the course absolutely cutting-edge. It provides a comprehensive educational and field experience that prepares veterinarians for the complexities of wildlife medicine in resource-limited and challenging environments.

WII was represented by a team of experts, including Dr. Ruchi Badola, Dean of the Faculty of Wildlife Sciences; Dr. Parag Nigam, Scientist G and Head of the Department of Wildlife Health Management; Dr. Bilal Habib, Scientist F, Department of Animal Ecology and Conservation Biology; Dr. Abhijit Das, Scientist E, Department of Endangered Species Management; Dr. C. P. Sharma, Principal Technical Officer, Forensic Cell, all of whom provided invaluable inputs to the course.

Beyond enabling participants to acquire technical skills, IWAH helps them build meaningful professional connections and nurture continued exchange of experience and knowledge. At the end of the course, participants become part of the Wild Animal Alumni Network. With this year's cohort, the IWAH alumni community now includes 276 veterinarians representing 39 countries. This global network growing every year, allows alumni to remain connected, seek guidance from mentors, and share new ideas with a shared goal of improved wildlife health.

As these professionals return to their respective countries, they carry with them improved approaches to monitoring animal health and more ethical methods of intervention when animals are in distress. The 11th year of the IWAH course not only marked more than a decade of dedicated effort but also strengthened the future of wildlife conservation by training the next generation of leaders to respond where they are needed most.

For those interested in participating in the next iteration of the IWAH course, please visit (<https://iwah.org>) for further information.





Strengthening the Frontline: Wildlife Institute of India Empowers Chandigarh Forest Department in Human-Wildlife Conflict Management

- *Dr. Tapendra Saini*

Expanding urban landscapes and wildlife habitats presents a complex challenge for conservation in the modern era. Addressing this aspect, the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun, organized a specialized five-day workshop titled “Developing Capacities in Managing Human-Wildlife Conflict” from January 12th to 16th, 2026. This intensive training program was specifically designed for 10 officials and frontline staff of the Chandigarh Forest Department, including Deputy Range Officers, Foresters, and Veterinary Officers. Coordinated by the Department of Wildlife Health Management (WHM), the initiative aimed to strengthen the practical and operational capabilities of field personnel to manage conflict situations in a safe, evidence-based, and coordinated manner. The inaugural session was graced by Chief Guest Dr. A. B. Shrivastav, Former Director, School of Wildlife Forensics & Health, NDVSU, Jabalpur alongside Dr. Ruchi Badola, Dean, Faculty of Wildlife Sciences and Course Coordinator Dr. Parag Nigam, Scientist-G & Head, Dept. of WHM, who emphasised the necessity of scientific protocols and inter-agency cooperation in addressing wildlife emergencies.

The curriculum provided a comprehensive exploration of the drivers of human-wildlife conflict, such as habitat fragmentation and land-use change, with a particular focus on the Shivalik foothills surrounding Chandigarh. Participants engaged in diverse learning modules covering ecological foundations, wildlife health, and forensic applications. Experts led detailed sessions on managing wild animals in distress and outlined the critical steps for stabilisation and safe transportation. The program highlighted that rescue operations must strictly adhere to legal frameworks and scientific protocols to avoid harm to both the animals and the responding personnel.

A significant portion of the workshop was dedicated to hands-on technical training and mock drills. Under the guidance of Dr. Parag Nigam and Dr. A. B. Shrivastav, participants were introduced to various capture techniques, navigating the complexities of both physical and chemical restraint. Practical exercises allowed staff to familiarize themselves with essential field tools, including radiotelemetry, camera traps, drones, and GPS units. A specialized mock drill focused on drug delivery systems, demonstrating the use of syringe projectors and blowpipes for immobilization. Furthermore, Dr. C. P. Sharma, Principal Technical Officer, Forensic Cell led a simulated wildlife crime scene investigation, where participants practiced securing sites and collecting evidence to ensure its admissibility in legal proceedings.

Beyond classroom and technical drills, the workshop provided valuable field exposure to various conservation models. Participants visited the Ganga Avlokan Centre in Haridwar to observe participatory conservation initiatives and learn strategies for community engagement, which are vital for fostering coexistence in urban and peri-urban landscapes. A visit to the Dehradun Zoo allowed the cohort to study ex-situ management practices, including husbandry, veterinary interventions, and dietary planning. Specialized sessions also addressed the management of specific taxa, such as herpetofauna, crocodilians, and canids, as well as the mitigation of monkey-related conflicts.

The workshop concluded with a valedictory session chaired by Dr. G. S. Bhardwaj, Director, WII, who shared insights from his extensive experience and encouraged the participants to integrate these new learnings into their future roles. Throughout the five days, the importance of professional conduct, detailed documentation, and human safety while handling wild animals was highlighted as the foundation of effective conflict management. By bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and field application, the program has significantly enhanced the readiness of the Chandigarh Forest Department to respond to wildlife challenges in a structured and scientific manner.

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Bal Ganga Prahari Corner: *Inspiring Future River Guardians*

- S. K. Pal

The WII-NMCG Training Team (Component 2) established 36th Ganga Aqualife Knowledge Centre (Bal Ganga Prahari Corner) at Ramkali Devi Saraswati Vidya Mandir School, Vrindavan, along the Yamuna River (Tributary of Ganga). The team members Mr. Sheetal Pal and Mr. Anshul Bhawsar conducted a session with Ganesh Dutt Sharma (Principal), teachers and students of the school. During the session, the team introduced the WII-NMCG Project, its objectives and conservation efforts. The main discussion focused on the ecological importance of the Ganga River and its tributaries, along with the conservation of key aquatic species such as the Gangetic River dolphin, otters, turtles and crocodiles. Additionally, awareness was created about freshwater biodiversity conservation, including rainwater harvesting and the prevention of river pollution from industrial chemicals, plastic waste, pesticides and untreated human waste. Educational and awareness materials were provided to the school library.

The establishment of the Bal Ganga Prahari (BGP) Corner serves as an effective knowledge pivot for students, enabling them to explore aquatic biodiversity through interactive displays, species cut-outs and publications. This initiative raises environmental awareness and strengthens the connection between young learners and nature. Overall, the establishment of this centre marks a significant step toward enhancing conservation education in the culturally rich region of Braj Bhoomi.

Author:

Mr. S. K. Pal, Project Associate-I under the WII-NMCG project, is actively engaged in the Capacity Building component. His work primarily focuses on organizing training workshops for the Forest Department and other key stakeholders, as well as conducting awareness programmes in Bal Ganga Prahari schools, colleges and universities on aquatic biodiversity conservation.



Activities of EIACP Centre, Wildlife Institute of India

from January – March 2026





1. Peacock Awareness and Mission LiFE Event at Travancore House, New Delhi, 03 - 05 February 2026

The Peacock Awareness and Mission LiFE Exhibition, titled “The Peacock’s Call: Mission LiFE for a Greener Tomorrow” was organized by the WWF EIACP Centre, New Delhi, at Travancore House. The EIACP Centre at the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, actively participated in the three-day event, which aimed to highlight the cultural and ecological significance of the Indian Peafowl (Peacock), India’s national bird, while promoting sustainable lifestyles under Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment).

The exhibition was inaugurated in the presence of senior government officials and conservation leaders. The session began with a welcome address by Dr. G. Areendran, followed by remarks from Ms. Lipika Roy. The thematic address was delivered by Ms. Nameeta Prasad, highlighting the importance of citizen participation in environmental conservation. Shri Ravi Singh attended as the Guest of Honour, and the keynote address was delivered by Shri Sushil Kumar Awasthi, who emphasized biodiversity conservation, protection of the Indian Peafowl, and the adoption of sustainable lifestyles in line with Mission LiFE.

The dignitaries visited the exhibition stalls and appreciated the outreach efforts of participating institutions. The EIACP Centre at WII showcased a wide range of publications and materials, including booklets on Elephant Reserves of India, Protected Area Database, and Ramsar Sites, as well as bookmarks and posters on Peacock conservation, Millets, and Mission LiFE themes.

A Mission LiFE Selfie Booth was set up to engage visitors and promote environmentally responsible behaviour. Interactive activities, awareness sessions, and pledge campaigns encouraged students and visitors to adopt sustainable practices and contribute to biodiversity conservation.

The exhibition successfully raised awareness about the ecological importance of the Indian Peafowl and promoted sustainable lifestyle practices under Mission LiFE. It also strengthened public engagement and encouraged collective action towards environmental conservation through interactive and educational outreach initiatives.



2. One-Day Module on Advances in Human–Wildlife Conflict Management, Forestry Module of Mid-Career Training (MCT) Phase III, 03 February 2026

The Peacock Awareness and Mission LiFE Exhibition, titled “The Peacock’s Call: Mission LiFE for a Greener Tomorrow” was organized by the WWF EIACP Centre, New Delhi, at Travancore House. The EIACP Centre at the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, actively participated in the three-day event, which aimed to highlight the cultural and ecological significance of the Indian Peafowl (Peacock), India’s national bird, while promoting sustainable lifestyles under Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment).

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Advances in Human–Wildlife Conflict Management
Forestry Module of Mid-Career Training (MCT) Phase - III (17) Course for IFS Officers

Wildlife Behaviour & HWC Management

HWC Management Frameworks

Animal Capture Techniques & Forensic Investigation

Managerial Perspectives

03 February 2026

Auditorium, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun

Organised by Wildlife Institute of India (WII) Dehradun

In Collaboration with Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA) Dehradun

3. Campus Bird Count under the Great Backyard Bird Count 13 –16 February 2026

The EIACP Centre at the Wildlife Institute of India conducted a four-day nature walk involving researchers and students across various habitats on the campus, including the Nature Trail, residential and faculty areas, grasslands, and sal forest patches. Participants took part in the activity, where they were divided into smaller groups and assigned specific locations to ensure systematic coverage. The exercise focused on observing and documenting bird species in a structured manner.

Bird sightings were recorded at regular 15-minute intervals, and each group maintained a daily checklist of species observed in their designated areas. These records were later compiled and uploaded to the eBird platform.



A significant outcome of the initiative was the recording of 206 bird species on the WII campus, placing it among the leading campuses in the country. This remarkable documentation reflects the rich avifaunal diversity of the area and underscores its importance for conservation and long-term ecological research.

Overall, participation in CBC 2026 reinforced the EIACP Centre's dedication to promoting citizen science, advancing data-driven conservation, and contributing to national biodiversity monitoring efforts on a daily basis, contributing to citizen science and strengthening biodiversity data records.

4. Campus Bird Count under the Great Backyard Bird Count at Graphic Era University

15 February 2026

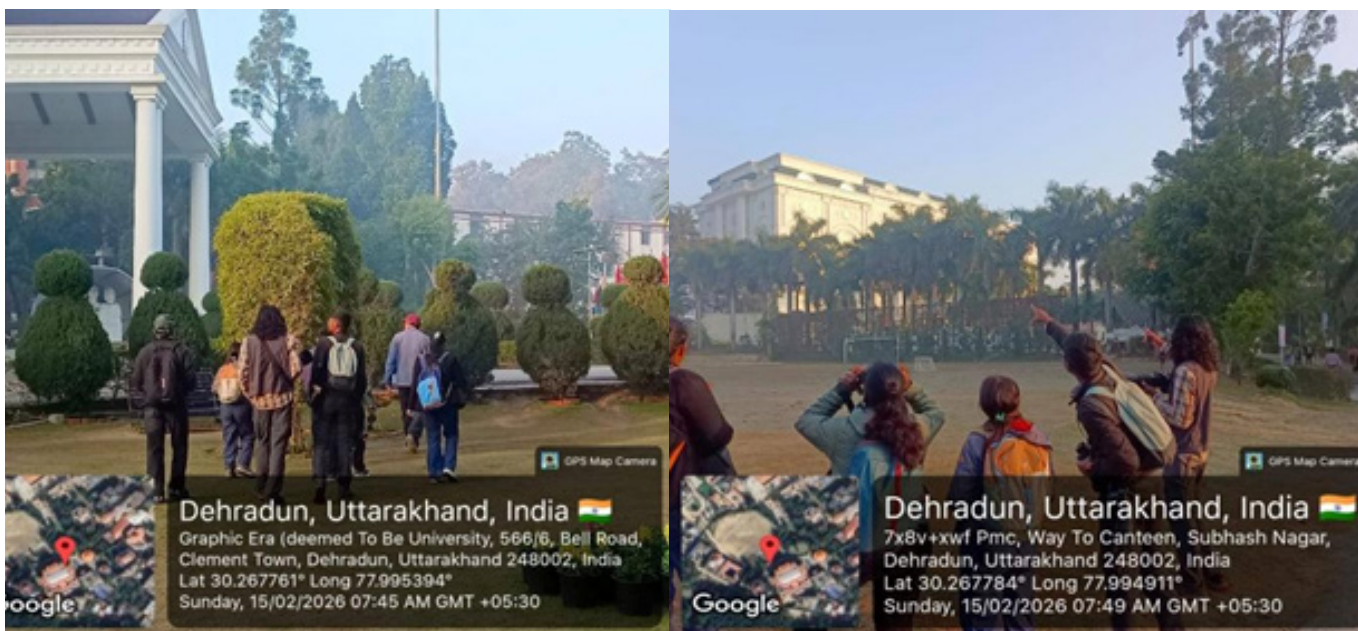
The Great Backyard Bird Count 2026 was conducted at Graphic Era (Deemed to be University), Dehradun, located in the Shivalik foothills. The programme was organized by the Centre for Sustainable Ecology and Biodiversity Research in collaboration with the EIACP Centre at the Wildlife Institute of India, the AMBER Foundation, and the Uttarakhand Biodiversity Board.

The initiative aimed to document bird diversity within the campus and adjoining sal forest areas, generate baseline data for long-term monitoring, and build capacity in bird identification and survey techniques. A transect-based survey of approximately 2 km was carried out, covering a range of habitats including built-up areas, open spaces, and forest edges.

Bird observations were recorded using both visual and acoustic methods, and the data were systematically documented and uploaded to the eBird platform. A total of 35 bird species were recorded during the survey, representing both urban-adapted and forest-associated species.



The findings highlight the ecological importance of campus green spaces as biodiversity refugia and their role in supporting avifaunal diversity in rapidly urbanizing landscapes. The programme also contributed to citizen science by generating valuable data on bird distribution while promoting awareness and participation in biodiversity conservation.



5. IRALE 2026 Conference at Bamboo Grove, Periyar Tiger Reserve

26–28 February 2026

The Indian Regional Association for Landscape Ecology (IRALE) Conference 2026 was organized from 26–28 February 2026 at Periyar Tiger Reserve, Thekkady, Kerala. The event brought together researchers, conservation practitioners, and policymakers to discuss emerging challenges and opportunities in landscape-level conservation.

Centered on the theme “Social Inclusivity towards Landscape Integrity and Resilience,” the conference emphasized the integration of scientific knowledge with field-based management practices, highlighting the critical role of community engagement in achieving sustainable conservation outcomes. Sessions held at Bamboo Grove focused on inclusive approaches to strengthen ecological resilience and landscape connectivity.

The EIACP Centre at the Wildlife Institute of India participated actively by presenting a range of knowledge products and contributing to awareness generation and the dissemination of information on biodiversity conservation and environmental management.

Organized in collaboration with the International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA), IRALE, and Dharti International Foundation the conference effectively combined scientific dialogue, outreach efforts, and grassroots perspectives. It reinforced the importance of conserving apex predators as a key component of maintaining ecological balance, supporting climate resilience, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of landscapes.



6. One-Day workshop on World Wildlife Day

03 March 2026

The Wildlife Institute of India, in collaboration with the EIACP Centre, organized a one-day workshop for Indian Forest Service (IFS) probationers (2025–2027 batch) from the Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy during their visit to WII, Dehradun, on the occasion of World Wildlife Day 2026. The workshop aimed to strengthen the linkage between field-level leadership and scientific research in wildlife conservation.

During the programme, Dr. Ramesh Chinnasamy, Scientist-E and Co-Coordinator, EIACP, highlighted the significant role of WII in advancing wildlife conservation through research, training, and capacity-building initiatives. The Dean and Director of WII also addressed the participants, sharing insights on the Institute's vision, ongoing conservation efforts, and key field challenges such as poaching, human–wildlife conflict, and decision-making under uncertain conditions. Drawing from a personal field experience, the Director emphasized the importance of calm, informed, and adaptive leadership in challenging situations.

As part of the workshop, the probationers were taken on a guided tour of WII's key facilities, where they were introduced to various scientific tools, research methodologies, and conservation frameworks. The visit provided valuable exposure to science-based approaches and management support systems, reinforcing the importance of integrating research with field-level decision-making.

The workshop served as an effective platform for knowledge exchange, enhancing the understanding of future forest officers as they prepare to take on their roles as field managers.

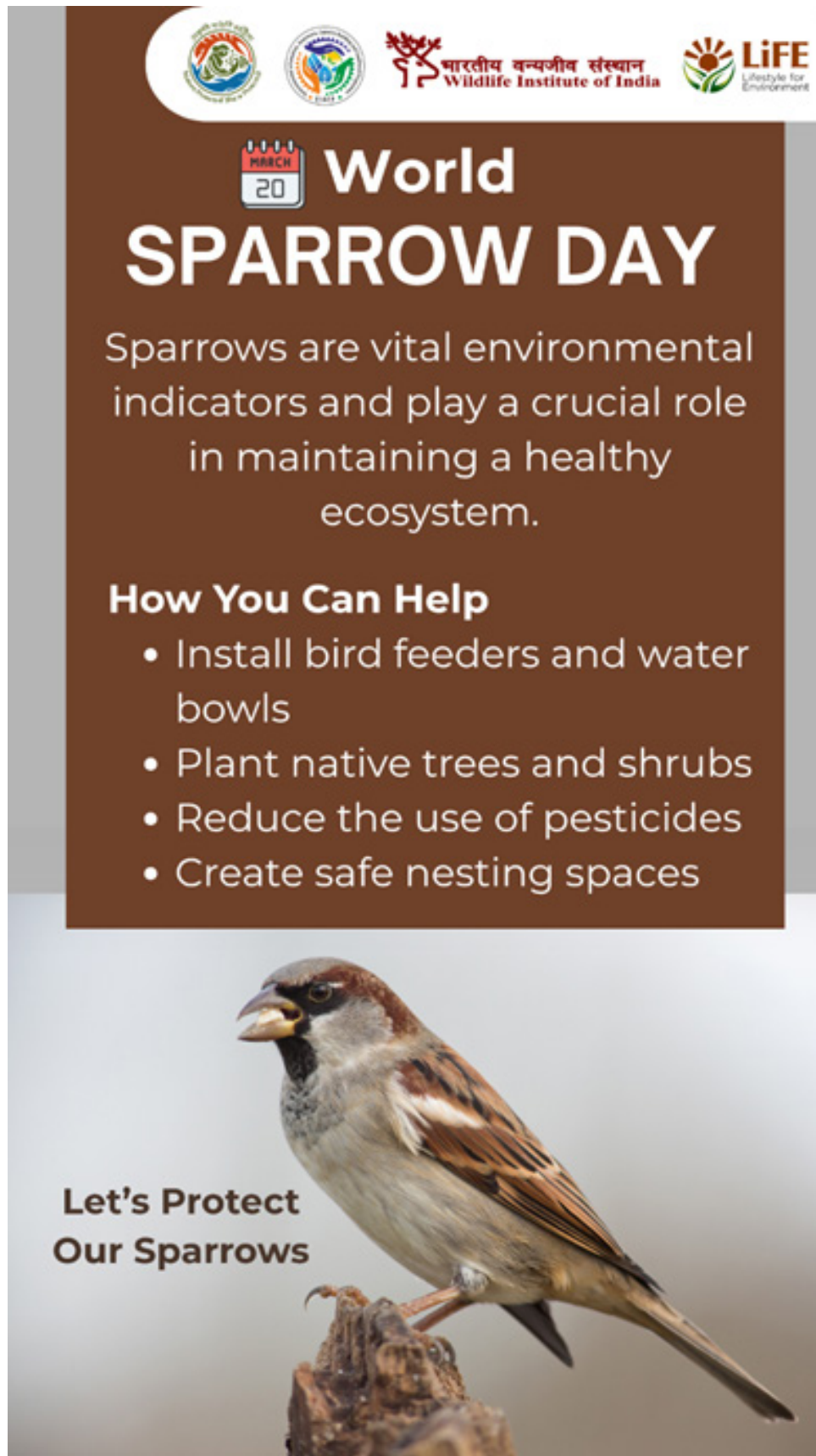


7. Celebration of World Sparrow Day

20 March 2026

On the occasion of World Sparrow Day 2026, observed annually to highlight the importance of sparrows and the need for their conservation, an awareness poster was released by the EIACP Centre at the Wildlife Institute of India. The day serves as a reminder of the declining populations of sparrows and the urgent need to protect their habitats.

The poster release aimed to sensitize students and various stakeholders about the ecological significance of sparrows as indicators of environmental health and their role in maintaining urban biodiversity. The initiative also encouraged collective action towards conserving sparrows and promoting bird-friendly practices in everyday life.



The poster is a vertical rectangular graphic with a dark brown background. At the top, it features four logos: the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) logo, the EIACP logo, the Wildlife Institute of India logo in Hindi (भारतीय वन्यजीव संस्थान), and the LIFE logo (Lifestyle for Environment). Below the logos is a small calendar icon showing 'MARCH 20'. The main title 'World SPARROW DAY' is written in large, white, bold letters. Below the title, the text 'Sparrows are vital environmental indicators and play a crucial role in maintaining a healthy ecosystem.' is written in a smaller white font. Underneath, the heading 'How You Can Help' is followed by a bulleted list of four actions: 'Install bird feeders and water bowls', 'Plant native trees and shrubs', 'Reduce the use of pesticides', and 'Create safe nesting spaces'. At the bottom of the poster, there is a photograph of a sparrow perched on a piece of wood. To the left of the sparrow, the text 'Let's Protect Our Sparrows' is written in white.

World SPARROW DAY

Sparrows are vital environmental indicators and play a crucial role in maintaining a healthy ecosystem.

How You Can Help

- Install bird feeders and water bowls
- Plant native trees and shrubs
- Reduce the use of pesticides
- Create safe nesting spaces

Let's Protect Our Sparrows

8. Celebration of World Bear Day

23 March 2026

On the occasion of World Bear Day, 23 March 2026, a poster highlighting the conservation significance of the Sloth Bear was released. The poster emphasized the ecological importance of bears in maintaining forest ecosystems and drew attention to the growing conservation challenges faced by the species, including habitat loss, human–bear conflict, and waste mismanagement.

The poster was formally released by Shri Ramesh Pandey, IFS, Additional Director General (Wildlife), MoEFCC. The event was graced by Dr. Ramesh Chinnasamy, Scientist-E & Co-Coordinator, EIACP, along with the Director and Registrar of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII).

The programme also witnessed the presence of EIACP staff and other faculty members of WII, who actively participated in the event and emphasized the importance of awareness and collaborative efforts for bear conservation.

The initiative aimed to sensitize stakeholders and the public about the need to safeguard India's bear species and promote coexistence through informed conservation actions.



9. Certificate Course in Nature Conservator-cum-Ecotourism Guide under the Green Skill Development Programme at Panna Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh from

20th February – 31st March 2026 and 14th March – 23rd April 2026

The EIACP Centre at the Wildlife Institute of India conducted a Certificate Course on Nature Conservator-cum-Ecotourism Guide at the Hinouta Ecotourism Complex, Panna Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh. The programme was implemented in two batches, with the first batch held from 20 February to 31 March 2026 and the second batch from 14 March to 23 April 2026.

This training programme was designed to provide participants with a balanced blend of theoretical understanding and practical exposure to ecotourism and conservation practices. Conducted under the Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP), the initiative focused on building capacities that support sustainable livelihoods while contributing to environmental conservation and restoration. It also aimed to create employment opportunities linked to biodiversity conservation, resource efficiency, and waste management.

The course was structured to enhance both technical competencies and awareness of sustainable development frameworks, aligning with national and global priorities such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), National Biodiversity Targets (NBTs), and the Waste Management Rules, (2016).

Key components of the training included modules on ecotourism entrepreneurship, biodiversity conservation, eco-trail planning and management, fundamentals of ecotourism, hospitality and land management practices, marketing strategies, employability skills, and hands-on field training. The programme was successfully completed by a total of 40 participants, with 20 trainees in each batch.

Green Skill
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

**CERTIFICATE COURSE IN
NATURE CONSERVATOR CUM
ECOTOURISM GUIDE**

First Batch: 20th February - 31st March, 2026
Second Batch: 14th March - 23 April, 2026
Panna Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh

Organised by
EIACP Centre
Wildlife Institute of India (WII)

Sponsored by
Ministry of Environment, Forest
and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)

Unique Initiative

RALLY FOR BIG CATS

The Rally for Big Cats 2026 is a national-level wildlife conservation campaign led by the International Big Cats Alliance in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India, EIACP, Indian Regional Association for Landscape Ecology, and the Dharti International Foundation, aimed at promoting the conservation of big cats and their ecosystems across India. The programme was officially launched on 27 January 2026 at Jawaharlal Nehru University, marking the flag-off of a 30-day, 7,000 km bike rally led by Dr. S. P. Yadav and Mr. Sanjay Kumar. Covering major conservation landscapes such as Jim Corbett National Park, Gir National Park, Satpura National Park, Pench National Park, Bandipur National Park, Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, and Periyar National Park, the rally engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including students, local communities, tourists, researchers, and forest officials. A series of awareness and outreach programmes were conducted across these locations, featuring interactive sessions, stakeholder consultations, and pledge activities that emphasized big cat conservation, habitat protection, and human-wildlife coexistence. Special outreach initiatives were organized at Jawai Leopard Conservation Reserve and Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary, while institutional engagements at Indian Institute of Forest Management and various educational institutions strengthened conservation awareness among youth. The campaign highlighted the ecological significance of big cats as keystone species essential for maintaining ecosystem balance. Overall, the initiative successfully fostered awareness, encouraged community participation, and reinforced a collective commitment towards wildlife conservation and sustainable coexistence across the country.

Glimpses of Rally for Big Cats





Heritage: *A Connector of Countries, Landscapes & Stories*

In the first quarter of 2026, the Wildlife Institute of India-Category 2 Centre (WII-C2C) for World Natural Heritage Management and Training for Asia and the Pacific, under the auspices of UNESCO, demonstrated a full range of heritage-linked activities. These programmes and interventions were some milestones along the way.

International Capacity-Building and Expert Advisory Role



MEA-ITEC Course Participants at FRI, Dehradun

WII-C2C continued with its series of natural heritage courses under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India (GoI). Two courses – the 3rd **Certificate Course in Natural Heritage Management (CCNHM)** from 2nd to 27th February and a newly launched 1st **Training in Mountain Heritage and Nature-Culture Linkages (TMHNCL)**, presented the participants with a holistic view of heritage management coupled with unique international networking opportunities. The 3rd CCNHM course had 19 participants from 16 countries, while the 1st TMHNCL brought together 18 participants from 13 countries. Overall, 23 countries spanning 4 continents were represented across the two courses - Trinidad & Tobago, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Lesotho, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Mauritius, Egypt, Lebanon, Russia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. The courses were designed around heritage concepts, integrated heritage management and interpretation, and were taught by a mix of WII faculty and renowned heritage practitioners from India and around the world. Both courses included memorable field trips to remarkable World Heritage Sites like Keoladeo National Park, Taj Mahal and the areas around Nanda Devi National Park and Valley of Flowers National Park.

In keeping with its regional responsibility for the natural heritage of the Asia-Pacific region distributed across 46 countries, WII-C2C had a central role in developing the Regional Framework Action Plan 2023–2030. The progress made on these plans was reviewed extensively through a **Mid-Cycle Review of the Implementation** by UNESCO during online deliberations conducted on 4th and 5th Feb, 2026. Key challenges in the execution of the strategy were brought forward by the Asia and Pacific Sub-Regions in the consecutive meetings with WII-C2C being an important entity in resolving them.



MEA-ITEC Field Visit to Areas Near Nanda Devi NP

National Level Skill Building

Besides international capacity-building, WII-C2C used this quarter to build heritage capabilities and conservation awareness at a national level. Multi-stakeholder capacity-building programmes were held by WII-C2C in the vicinity of the iconic World Heritage Sites, Manas Wildlife Sanctuary and Kaziranga National Park, which have been on the World Heritage List since 1985. **“Capacity Building Workshop on Managing Natural World Heritage Sites at Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam”** (21st–22nd Jan, 2026) and **“Training Workshop on Natural World Heritage at Kaziranga National Park, Assam”** (24th Jan, 2026) brought to the forefront the pride and concern that the local stakeholders share for their Natural World Heritage. The training helped convey the importance of the World Heritage tag to frontline forest staff, Eco Development Communities, tourism officials and local media, among others. A large number of valuable suggestions on how to harness the power of heritage for good were made by the participants (about 20 frontline staff members in Manas and a multi-stakeholder group of about 50 in Kaziranga) to the WII-C2C team and the Assam Forest Department leadership attendance.



MEA-ITEC Field Visit to Areas Near Nanda Devi NP



Participants engage in SWOT analysis discussions, Kaziranga National Park

Projecting Heritage's Inherent Stories

Two events that WII-C2C engaged in the past quarter took natural heritage one step closer to a broader audience who may or may not deal with it on a daily basis. Heritage is powered by emotions and stories and the open talk “India’s Natural Heritage through Biodiversity and Culture” (25th Feb, 2026) by Mr. Stephen Alter, renowned naturalist and author, amply demonstrated this. The global tour that he took the attendees on in the WII Porta Cabin through a series of still images was proof that a well-framed narrative can go a long way in helping reestablish a true connection with nature. The talk was also an opportunity for international trainees from the above-mentioned 3rd MEA-ITEC CCNHM to hear firsthand from one of India’s best nature writers.

Likewise, the “WTI INTACH Gaja Utsav” (24th-25th Mar, 2026) held in the Doon Library and Doon University allowed admirers of Asian elephants across disciplines to gather and speak to an urban audience about the cultural, natural and intangible significance of these magnificent giants. WII-C2C’s presentation on Day 1, “Elephant Stories: Natural, Cultural and Intangible Aspects of Managing World Heritage Sites” focused on how Asian elephants are in fact the perfect combination of all that is or can be considered heritage. On the second day, student attendees at Doon University were treated to samples of classic storytelling from elephant documentaries made by the legendary Bedi brothers and the Assamese NGO Hati Bondhu.



Stephen Alter with audience after his talk on India’s Natural Heritage

Ripples of Change: Water, Women, and Conservation in Action

Celebration of The World Water Day 2026 “Water and Gender”- Where Water Flows, Equality Grows.

- Aarti Chauhan

“The earth, the air, the land and the water are not an inheritance from our forefathers but on loan from our children.”

- Mahatma Gandhi

As Mahatma Gandhi wisely said, water is our loan from our future generation; water can shape our lives, our livelihoods depend on it, and it can transform landscapes on a larger scale. World Water Day 2026, with the theme “**Water and Gender! Where Water Flows, Equality Grows**”, was commemorated at various localities with great enthusiasm across several parts of the Ganga Basin states, such as West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, and Uttarakhand. WII-NMCG collaborate with its partner institutions to highlight the fundamental relationship and dependencies of water across the length and breadth of India.

A joint event was organized with the efforts of Uttarakhand State Council for Science and Technology (UCOST), Sushila Institute of Medical Sciences (SIMS), and Himalayan Academy of Science & Technology (HAST), at SIMS, Dehradun, to celebrate World Water Day 2026. The WII-NMCG was also invited as a collaborative partner in the event. Nearly 150 students participated in that from various medical backgrounds and academic fields, contributing valuable insights and depth to the discussions. A thought-provoking talk delivered by Dr. Sangeeta Angom, Project Scientist and Training Coordinator, WII-NMCG Project. The key highlight of the event was focused on the Ganga River and its biodiversity and current trends. The session largely covers the importance of water as a critical natural resource, its existing biodiversity, and demonstrates the major contribution of women in sustainable water resource management at the household and community levels. Various competitions were also organized to put the creative minds to work, including rangoli competition, wall painting competition, and face painting competition. This platform provides students with a vibrant platform to interpret ideas of conservation and equality through art. The participants were encouraged, and winners were awarded with gifts and certificates. In the event, a plantation drive was also organized to promote environment stability and to instil a sense of responsibility towards nature. These active representations show a comprehensive dedication of students towards the preservation of ecosystems and the development of a more sustainable future.

The NSS volunteers from Durga Mahavidyalaya, in Raipur, Chhattisgarh, organized an intensive cleanliness drive at the nearby lake. A total of 40 volunteers and 03 programme officers actively participated in the drive, promoting the importance of cleaning water bodies and community service for the betterment of our nation. The Bal Ganga Prahari cadre at Fulia Sikshaniketan school, Nadia, from the state of West Bengal, also conducted a cleanliness drive in the school campus and classrooms. These types of events play a crucial role in fostering environmental responsibility among school students to reinforce the idea that conservation begins at home and in everyday spaces. Similarly, in Uttar Pradesh state, the collaborative partner Women Empowerment Welfare Society, Kanpur, along with the Ganga Task Force, conducted a Ganga river bank cleanliness drive to emphasize on collective responsibility of NGO, local groups and youth towards maintaining the river ecosystems and highlighted the role of women-driven initiatives in conservation.

Collectively, all these events brought the highlights to the World Water Day 2026 theme, “Water and Gender”, with the campaign slogan “Where Water Flows, Equality Grows”. It reflects the intricate connection between gender equality and water access, as women are always at the forefront of water management in households and local communities, not only in India but also in the world. Ensuring safe and equitable access to water will reduce their burden and also enhance equal opportunities for women in education, health, and increase decision-making roles, which will promote the inclusive and sustainable development.

Author:

Ms. Aarti Chauhan is currently working as a Project Associate I in the WII-NMCG Project. She is extensively involved with the outreach activities of the Bal Ganga Prahari Initiative of the Project in the Ganga River Basin.



World Water Day celebration at Sushila Institute of Medical Sciences(SIMS), Dehradun, Uttarakhand



Cleanliness Drive conducted by the students of Fulia Sikshaniketan School, Nadia, West Bengal

Blood Donation Camp

- Danish Kaleem

On 11th March 2026, the Wildlife Institute of India–National Mission for Clean Ganga (WII–NMCG) project team organized a Blood Donation Camp at the National Centre for River Research in collaboration with the Dehradun Charitable Blood Centre.

The blood donation camp witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, researchers, and staff. A total of 107 individuals registered, out of which 88 units of blood were successfully donated. The event was carried out under proper medical supervision, with arrangements for health screening and post-donation care to ensure donor safety.



WII Community Convenes to Discuss the 'Seva Sankalp Resolution', Dehradun, 3 March 2026

Members of the WII community, including faculty, officers, and staff, assembled at the Institute's Main Entrance Foyer to gain insights into the 'Seva Sankalp Resolution' adopted by the Union Cabinet on 24 February, 2026.

The gathering, attended by over 70 participants, featured a formal reading of the resolution to familiarise attendees with its objectives and guiding principles. The session aimed to promote awareness and encourage alignment with the resolution's intent.

Following the reading, all present collectively took a pledge to uphold and work in accordance with the spirit of the 'Seva Sankalp Resolution', reaffirming their commitment to its goals.



हिंदी कार्यशाला- सरकारी पत्राचार एवं टिप्पण आलेखन

भारतीय वन्यजीव संस्थान में दिनांक 6 मार्च 2026 को 'सरकारी पत्राचार एवं टिप्पण आलेखन' विषय पर एक द्विदिवसीय कार्यशाला का सफलतापूर्वक आयोजन किया गया। इस कार्यशाला का उद्देश्य संस्थान के अधिकारियों एवं कर्मचारियों को सरकारी कार्यों में हिंदी के प्रभावी, सटीक एवं मानक प्रयोग के प्रति जागरूक करना था। कार्यक्रम में श्री महिमानंद भट्ट ने विशेषज्ञ वक्ता के रूप में सहभागिता की। अपने व्याख्यान के दौरान उन्होंने सरकारी पत्राचार की मूलभूत संरचना, भाषा की शुद्धता, औपचारिक शैली तथा टिप्पण लेखन की आवश्यक तकनीकों पर विस्तारपूर्वक प्रकाश डाला। उन्होंने यह भी बताया कि किस प्रकार सरल, स्पष्ट और नियमसम्मत भाषा का प्रयोग प्रशासनिक कार्यों को अधिक प्रभावी और पारदर्शी बनाता है।

इस कार्यशाला में अधिकारियों एवं कर्मचारियों समेत कुल 36 लोगों ने भाग लिया और पूरे सत्र के दौरान सक्रिय रूप से सहभागिता निभाई। श्री महिमानंद भट्ट ने अनेक व्यावहारिक उदाहरणों के माध्यम से प्रतिभागियों को प्रशिक्षण प्रदान किया, जिससे वे कार्यालयी कार्यों में हिंदी का अधिक दक्षता के साथ उपयोग कर सकें। उन्होंने पत्रों और टिप्पणियों में होने वाली सामान्य त्रुटियों की ओर ध्यान आकर्षित करते हुए उनके सुधार के उपाय भी बताए। प्रतिभागियों ने विभिन्न विषयों पर प्रश्न पूछकर अपनी जिज्ञासाओं का समाधान प्राप्त किया तथा इस कार्यशाला को अत्यंत उपयोगी, ज्ञानवर्धक और व्यवहारिक दृष्टि से महत्वपूर्ण बताया।



Republic Day Celebration at Wildlife Institute of India

Dehradun, January 26 – The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) celebrated the 77th Republic Day with great enthusiasm and patriotic spirit. The Director, Dr. G. S. Bhardwaj, unfurled the National Flag on the institute campus, marking the commencement of the celebrations.

On this occasion, meritorious staff members and medal winners of the All-India Sports Meet were felicitated in recognition of their outstanding achievements and contributions.

The celebration also included a plantation drive, reflecting the Institute's commitment to environmental conservation and reinforcing the spirit of national responsibility.



40th Certificate Course in Wildlife Management, Dehradun (1st November 2025 – 31st January 2026)

The 40th Certificate Course in Wildlife Management began on 1st November 2025 and concluded on 31st January 2026. Thirteen officer trainees of the rank of Range Forest Officer, Deputy Range Forest Officer & equivalent from different States and from Nepal, participated in this course. Among them, eight trainees were from Karnataka, one each from Tripura, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and two from Nepal.

The course curriculum of the Certificate Course was divided into six modules and six submodules. During the course, a significant portion of the time was spent undertaking field tours to various Protected Areas/National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries and Institutions. More importantly, practical exercises with respect to Computer Applications, GPS and Map reading demonstration of drug delivery equipment, identification of different wildlife parts and products, Crime Scene Investigation, filing of the charge sheet, designing nature trails and other aspects which were essential for practical management aspects were taught in depth. The Field Components of the modules included Wildlife Orientation-cum-Technique Tour to Rajaji Tiger Reserve and Wildlife Management Tour to Madhya Pradesh and Sri Lanka.

During the course, the performance of officer trainees was assessed by theoretical examination and practical evaluation based on the field projects, individual presentations and tour journals. They also had a final Viva Voce evaluated by an expert panel. All thirteen officer trainees have successfully completed the course.

Mr. Bharthesh B. Valmiki received the Gold Medal for the Top Trainee. The Institute's Silver Medal for the Best All Round Wildlifer was won by Mr. Amruth A. Desai. The Institute's Silver Medal for the 'Best Performance in the Wildlife Management Module' was given to Mr. Venkatesh Naik H.



Mr. Amruth A. Desai
Gold Medal



Mr. Bharthesh B. Valmiki
Silver Medal



Mr. Venkatesh Naik H.
Silver Medal

Legacy in Retirement: *Honouring Our Retired Personnel*



**Shri Ram Pal Mourya,
Lab Assistant**

Date of joining: 27.03.1987
Date of farewell: 31.01.2026

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