WNE - INDIA
E- Monthly Newsletter

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A New Beginning at Gandhabaduli Abjakhali Free Primary School

For years, students at Gandhabaduli Abjakhali Free Primary School in South 24 Parganas learned in unsafe and damaged classrooms, yet their determination remained strong. Under the EDM initiative, two classrooms and a corridor have been rebuilt, creating bright, safe and welcoming learning spaces.

Today, the school has more than 130 students, reflecting growing trust within the community. The addition of a new classroom for Grade V and a dedicated computer room, mark an important step toward improving the quality of education. These developments are expected to further enhance the teaching-learning process and create new opportunities for students.

The transformation has not only improved the learning environment but also boosted students' confidence and enthusiasm. With continued support, it is hoped that student enrollment will increase further in the coming years. Backed by the generous CSR support of Muthoot Finance, this initiative has turned a long-standing challenge into an opportunity, paving the way for a brighter future for every child.

Inauguration of New Classrooms

Photo From The Field

Bridging Hope in Amta, Howrah

In the flood-prone region of Amta, Howrah, we have achieved a significant milestone toward building a more resilient future. In collaboration with the Irrigation Department of West Bengal, we successfully conducted the Topographical (Total Station) Survey, laying the foundation for improved flood management.

This crucial step now enables the proposed construction of a bridge and sluice gate, which will help regulate water flow and address long-standing drainage challenges. Through this initiative, we aim to support local communities—especially farmers—by reducing the impact of recurring monsoon disruptions and protecting their livelihoods.

Webinar Session On Phenotypic Plasticity as an Adaptation to Seasonal Changes in Satyrine Butterflies

Phenotypic Plasticity as an Adaptation to Seasonal Changes in Satyrine Butterflies

A webinar on butterfly adaptations explored how Satyrine species respond to seasonal changes through phenotypic plasticity. Led by Indukala Prasannakumar, the session highlighted predator avoidance strategies, including eyespot variations, and the influence of environmental factors like temperature and host plants. With over 35 active participants, the webinar sparked engaging discussions and strengthened awareness on butterfly ecology, showcasing the role of digital platforms in promoting conservation education.

Editorial

As the month and year drew to a close, WNE undertook a series of impactful and engaging initiatives across multiple domains. Team EDM focused on renovating deteriorating government school facilities in South 24 Parganas, West Bengal, improving the learning environment for students. Meanwhile, the Sarpa Sathis actively worked across cities and villages to rescue snakes, raise awareness, and address deep-rooted superstitions and fear surrounding these vital reptiles.

Bana Bandhu advanced plantation drives and agroforestry initiatives aimed at long-term carbon sequestration and ecosystem restoration. Gentle Giants strengthened conservation efforts by monitoring elephant corridors, studying the behaviour of Asian elephants in the northeastern regions, and developing effective mitigation strategies.

SIT continued its grassroots engagement, conducting awareness campaigns in coastal schools to highlight the importance of marine ecosystem conservation. The team also interacted closely with fishing communities across coastal West Bengal and Odisha, gaining insights into livelihood challenges while documenting vulnerabilities of marine species and habitats.

In addition to ongoing projects, WNE STARTUP GRANT awardees contributed significantly through field-based conservation work, collaborating with local communities and authorities for data collection and protection of vulnerable ecosystems.

Our DGPS survey team successfully demarcated forest boundaries at Kalaikunda in coordination with CRPF and Forest Department officials. Furthermore, a topographical (Total Station) survey at Amta, Howrah, in collaboration with the Irrigation Department, laid the groundwork for improved flood management through proposed infrastructure such as a bridge and sluice gate.

Inspiring Young Minds for Marine Conservation

Our awareness journey on Marine Biodiversity and Elasmobranch Conservation continues to expand, reaching young minds across schools. Under the SIT initiative, we conducted two engaging programs involving over 100 students and teachers. At Sundarika Bartika Vivekananda Vidyamandir School and Tafa Pre-primary School, participants learned about marine life, especially sharks and rays, and their importance in maintaining a healthy ecosystem.

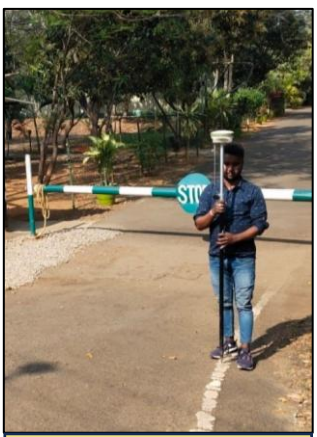
Our Marine Biologist With Fishermen Community

The sessions were interactive, inspiring curiosity and awareness among students. So far, we have reached over 160 students and teachers across four schools, along with 25+ fishermen through community meetings. Led by our Marine Biologist, Sourav Chattopadhyay, under the RAP program of the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), with support from Fondation Segré, this initiative aims to inspire the next generation to protect our oceans.

Ensuring Clear Boundaries at Tangasol CRPF Camp

At Tangasol CRPF Camp, an important step has been taken to ensure clear boundaries and responsible land use. We recently conducted a DGPS survey to understand whether the camp area overlaps with the surrounding forest land.

This was a joint effort. CRPF staff, the trained survey team of WNE and Forest Department officials worked together on the ground. The survey has now been successfully completed. It provides clear information about land boundaries and helps avoid future conflicts or confusion



DGPS Survey at Kalaikunda

Stay Tuned for New WNE START-UP GRANT

Analyzing the Leopard deaths in India: Causes, Statistical Trends, and Future Projections

-Shwetadri Bhandari
Founder/President

The *Indian leopard* represents one of the most widely distributed large carnivores in India, with an estimated population exceeding 12,000 individuals. Despite this ecological success, mortality rates remain critically high, raising concerns about long-term population stability.

From various sources, we have found that in the last 12 years (from 2014 to 2025) there are a total of 5,840 leopard deaths in India which means nearly 487 leopard deaths annually that is more than 1 leopard per day. which is definitely alarming.

- ✓ **2020:** 527 deaths
- ✓ **2021:** 597 deaths
- ✓ **2022:** 536 deaths
- ✓ **2023:** 544 deaths
- ✓ **2024:** 540 deaths
- ✓ **2025:** 542 deaths
- ✓ **2019:** 493 deaths
- ✓ **2014:** 331 deaths
- ✓ **2015:** 399 deaths
- ✓ **2016:** 440 deaths
- ✓ **2017:** 431 deaths
- ✓ **2018:** 460 deaths

Now let us dive into the cause of this deaths. For analyzing the data, we take divide mortality rate in two parts one due to poaching and seizures and others causes. In the other mortality causes includes, road/train accidents, retaliatory killing by villagers, infighting, drowning in wells and natural deaths.

Year	Poaching & Seizures	Other Mortality*	Total Deaths	Key Drivers/Notes
2014	118	213	331	Rise in road accidents noted in Maharashtra and Uttarakhand.
2015	127	272	399	Significant conflict in Shivalik and Central India.
2016	154	286	440	High mortality in Karnataka due to urbanization.
2017	159	272	431	Uttarakhand emerged as a major poaching hub.
2018	155	305	460	Highest in 5 years; 74 deaths due to accidents alone.
2019	133	360	493	Increased "retaliatory killings" by villagers.
2020	170	357	527	Spike in poaching during pandemic lockdowns.
2021	182	415	597	Maharashtra recorded its highest toll (167).
2022	162	374	536	Growing impact of linear infrastructure (highways/rail).
2023	155	389	544	High number of leopards falling into open wells.
2024	130	410	540	Increased deaths in the Shivalik-Gangetic landscape.
2025	108**	434**	542	Record deaths in Kerala (highest in a decade).

Table No.1: Cause wise death of leopards per year

A total of 5840 leopards died in the last 12 years; out of which an average 146 leopard died due to poaching and seizures per year (Table 2). This means there is an organized poaching activity and major mitigation has to be taken in future. Very interestingly the case of poaching as well as total number of leopard deaths hit its peak during the time COVID Lockdown period.

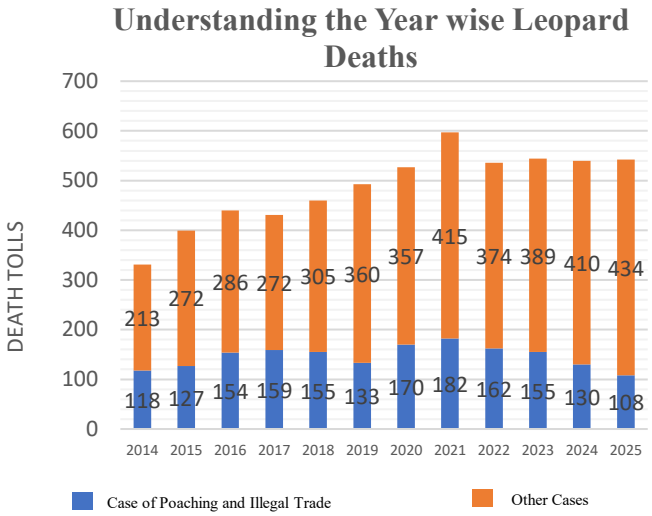


Table No.2: Understanding the Year wise Leopard Deaths in India from 2014 to 2025

The case of leopard deaths due to nature cause is only 20% this means the case of unnatural leopard deaths is very high.

In conclusion, there needs to be some major activities done to reduce the case of leopard deaths in India as nearly 80% deaths of Leopards are unnatural deaths. Our organization will focus on this issue in the upcoming five years.

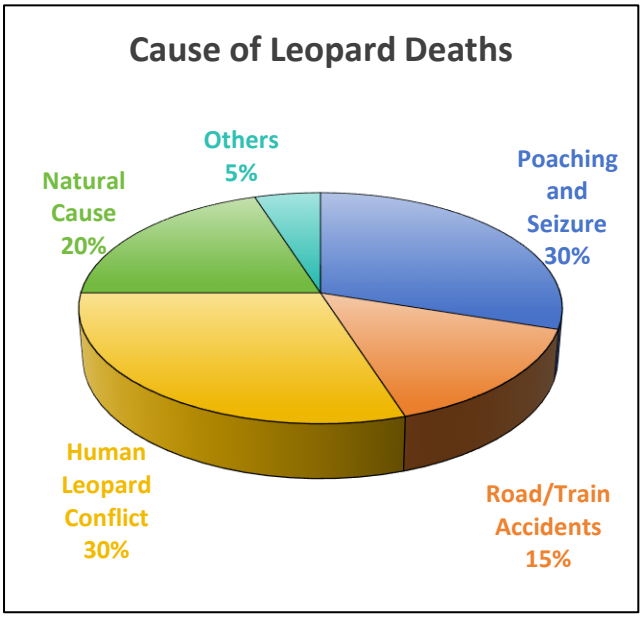


Chart 1: Cause of Leopard Deaths

Sources:

- ❑ Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI)
- ❑ Times of India
- ❑ Indian Express
- ❑ The Hindu

Carbon Credits and the Power of the Right Trees

Carbon credits are an important tool for climate action, and under the *Bana Bandhu* initiative, tree-based systems are central to achieving both environmental and livelihood benefits. The focus is not just on planting more trees, but on selecting the right species for the right locations to ensure sustainability.

Fast-growing species like bamboo are promoted for quick carbon sequestration and early economic returns, while native species such as neem and acacia support long-term carbon storage and biodiversity. Mixed plantations are encouraged over monoculture systems, as they improve soil health, reduce risks, and enhance overall ecosystem resilience.

Agroforestry is a key approach, integrating trees with crops to increase carbon storage while generating additional income for farmers. In suitable areas, ecosystem restoration efforts also contribute to climate resilience. In our *Bana Bandhu* Project, we connect carbon credits with real people, ensuring that environmental conservation directly supports community livelihoods.

i) Plantation ii) After 5 years

Sarpa Sathi: Protecting Snakes, Promoting Rescue and Awareness Driving Human–Snake Coexistence

Our Sarpa Sathi initiative continues to make a meaningful impact in reducing human–snake conflict through dedicated rescue, awareness, and community engagement efforts. Across Karnataka and Rajasthan, trained Sarpa Sathis have successfully rescued and safely released 73 snakes back into their natural habitats, ensuring both human safety and wildlife protection. Beyond rescue operations, the team has conducted three focused awareness programs in local communities. These sessions emphasized understanding snake behavior, debunking common myths, promoting safe practices during encounters, and highlighting the ecological importance of snakes in maintaining balance in natural ecosystems. Through consistent on-ground efforts, the initiative is helping shift perceptions—transforming fear into awareness and encouraging coexistence. By building local capacity and fostering community participation, Sarpa Sathi is creating a network of informed and responsible individuals who act as first responders during conflict situations. These combined efforts are strengthening grassroots conservation and paving the way for a future where humans and snakes can coexist safely and respectfully.

Russell's Viper Rescued from Garden

Schools in Degraded Condition

Our EDM team has identified two government schools facing serious sanitation issues, affecting students' health and dignity, especially for girl students. We are currently assessing the situation and planning necessary interventions to improve hygiene and infrastructure, aiming to create safe and clean learning environments for all students.

Condition of The Schools

Conservation of Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle

Under the WNE Start-Up Grant, conservation efforts for the Critically Endangered Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle in Kerala are actively underway. Initial nesting surveys have successfully identified three active nesting sites, marking a significant step forward in understanding the species' breeding patterns and habitat use. Community engagement has also been initiated, involving local stakeholders in monitoring and protection efforts. In collaboration with the Forest Department, measures are being taken to safeguard nesting areas, reduce disturbances, and ensure better survival rates for hatchlings. These combined efforts represent an important foundation for long-term conservation, strengthening both scientific understanding and community-led stewardship to secure the future of this rare and vulnerable species.

i)Found Eggs On Sand Bed ii) Built Nests

Protecting Pallas's Fish Eagle: A WNE Start-Up Initiative

Taking Survey Of Palla's Fish Eagle

At Asan Conservation Reserve, Uttarakhand, conservation efforts for the rare Pallas's Fish Eagle are underway under the WNE START-UP GRANT. Recent surveys have identified key riverine habitats and nesting trees while documenting diverse birdlife, including threatened species. Alongside research, strong community engagement through awareness programs is building local support. These combined efforts mark a promising beginning toward securing a safer breeding future for this remarkable raptor.

Hosti-Bondhu: Bridging the Gap Between Humans and Elephants

In the conflict-prone villages of Udalguri, Assam, where nights are often filled with fear and uncertainty, a quiet movement of courage is taking shape. "Hosti-Bondhu" initiative is bringing people together to stand at the frontline of human–elephant conflict—not with weapons, but with compassion and responsibility. Today, 16 teams with over 250 trained volunteers walk through fields and village paths, responding to distress calls, guiding elephants away from homes, and protecting both human lives and these gentle giants. In moments of crisis, they become a bridge—coordinating with the forest department and administration, ensuring timely action and safety.

Be a part of this life-saving initiative. You can support a Hosti-Bondhu team with a contribution of ₹30,000 per year, helping sustain on-ground volunteers, training, and rapid response efforts in conflict zones. Your support not only protects human lives and elephants but also strengthens community resilience.

Donors are eligible for 80G tax benefits.

To Donate Visit Here

i) Elephant Affected House ii) Awaring villagers

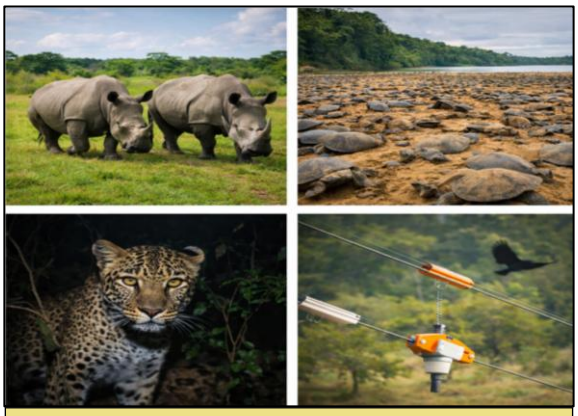
Top Stories Across The Globe

Guardians of the Sky: Rajasthan's Role in Saving the Steppe Eagle

Two key bird habitats in Rajasthan—Jorbeer Conservation Reserve and Desert National Park—have been included in a global action plan to protect the endangered Steppe Eagle. The UN-backed initiative focuses on habitat conservation, monitoring, and international cooperation across migratory routes to safeguard this species over the next decade.

Flight of hope for the Steppe Eagle.

Small Wins, Big Hope: Global Wildlife Stories of Resilience



Small actions, big change—stories of resilience shaping the future of wildlife worldwide

A recent global wildlife roundup highlights encouraging conservation successes, from rhinos returning to Uganda after 40 years to record turtle nesting in the Amazon. Efforts like leopard monitoring and bird-safe power lines show how small, targeted actions can significantly protect biodiversity and support wildlife recovery worldwide.

Tragedy on the Tracks: Rare Bison Lost in Poland

Even recovered species remain vulnerable—human-wildlife conflict continues to shape their future

Three rare European bison were killed after a train struck a herd in Poland's Białowieża Forest, one of Europe's last primeval woodlands. The accident highlights ongoing risks to wildlife despite conservation success, as the species—once nearly extinct—still faces threats from human infrastructure and habitat overlap.

Shadows of the Forest: Poaching Ring Busted in Bastar

A major wildlife poaching case in Bastar, Chhattisgarh, led to the recovery of tiger and leopard skins and the arrest of eight individuals. Authorities exposed an illegal trade network targeting endangered species, highlighting ongoing threats to wildlife and the urgent need for stronger conservation and enforcement measures.

Every skin tells a story lost—urgent action is needed to protect those who cannot speak.