

### Saving The Seas Of Odisha And West Bengal... One Meeting At A Time:

For the last couple of years, our specialized SIT Team has been actively conducting extensive field studies along the coastal margins of West Bengal and Odisha to better understand the illegal hunting, poaching and trading of the scheduled marine species. Through strategic and systematic field surveys at various fishing harbors and open fish markets near riverine and estuarine waters, we have been assessing the ecological dynamics of these ecosystems and documenting the diverse marine species that frequent these habitats year round.

These surveys have led to the identification of several critical threats affecting marine fauna, ranging from overfishing to illegal poaching and unregulated trade, all of which are severely jeopardizing their survival in the wild.



Giant Guitarfish Caught By Local Fishermen



Giant Guitarfish Caught By Local Fishermen

To gain deeper insight into the scale and mechanisms of poaching and targeted hunting, we expanded the study to the coastal margins of Odisha. A 16-day intensive field survey was conducted across major fishing hubs, including Bhitarkanika, Paradip Port, and Dhamara Port. The survey revealed the frequent capture and high-value auctioning of important elasmobranch species. Among the species recorded were several endangered and Schedule I protected species, including sawfish, hammerhead sharks, bamboo sharks, bull sharks, tiger sharks, sharp-nose and blunt-nose guitarfish, butterfly rays, and others.

This field investigation has been crucial in understanding the intensity of overfishing pressures and the trade mechanisms impacting elasmobranch populations. The findings highlight the urgent need for strengthened monitoring, regulation, and conservation interventions to safeguard marine biodiversity along our eastern coastline.

### Webinar Session On Importance Of Community Participation In Field-based Research



Prachi Upadhyay Discussing About The Ethical Considerations To Take While Collecting Data From Communities

This month Prachi Upadhyay, a fellow researcher from IIFM, Bhopal shared one of the most pressing conservation challenges of our time that is, understanding the complex interactions between human societies and wildlife, and fostering sustainable coexistence strategies that benefit both. The session was attended by over 30 individuals, who were either researcher, academicians, citizen scientist and conservationist.

The presenter stated firmly that connecting with local communities play huge role in the success of research, starting from the data collection to the implementation of solutions. Participants also raised their concerns about the difficulty in connecting with locals, to which Prachi related from her personal experiences and shared that showing up consistently and making them realize that the project is for the benefit of people will finally break the barrier.

# Editorial

*WNE has encountered a fascinating year, this year with its outreach activities. Researchers, academicians, interns, collaborative ventures with organizations working across the country joined hands with us to stand firm in conserving the amazing and endemic floral and faunal diversity of our country.*

*This year SIT and EDM worked remarkably, where the former worked relentlessly to understand and address crucial threats on the marine ecosystem of the country while the latter took a step forward in identifying various declining educational centers and performing infrastructural uplift in those institutions which are a gateway for a bright future of our upcoming generations.*

*[WNE STARTUP GRANT](#) this year was extremely privileged to support four amazing projects started with in-situ conservation initiative for Gooty Tarantula in Andhra Pradesh to enriching community and influencing young children to plant and take care of the mangroves of Ernakulum. The story does stop here as the Grant continued to encourage the conservation two endangered species - Pallas' Fish Eagle in Uttarakhand and Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle in the tidal creeks of Kerala.*

*Sarpa Sathis across our working area has been keeping a vigilant eye towards rescue and rehabilitation works along with the concerned authorities while practicing safety tips and awakening the multitude of snake conservation. Gentle Giants too has been working silently in studying elephant behavior and movement pattern across the southern West Bengal and will shortly publish its years of research and observation on ground for future conservation of these amazing megafauna.*

## World Wetlands Day: Learning, Engaging, Inspiring:

In collaboration with Chalrata Forest Division (UFD) and Bhomya Foundation in Uttarakhand we have conducted an insightful seminar on protecting the endangered Pallas' Fish Eagle—the "Guardian of the Water". Pallas' Fish Eagle being an endangered bird and an important species thriving in the wetland ecosystem, [Sipu](#) expressed how the shrinking wetland are jeopardizing the already critically declining population of this amazing avian carnivore.



Photo From The Seminar

The community engagement during the seminar was to enlighten the frontline staff and the local inhabitant who are the real protector of both the bird and its rapidly disappearing habitat. This seminar was just the tip of iceberg of the long-termed goal, Sipu is working towards to conserve this critically endangered Pallas' Fish Eagle at the Himalayan landscapes.

## Rebuilding Classrooms, Restoring Hope

The rebuilding of three classrooms at Gabhabaduli Abjakhali Free Primary School, South 24 Parganas has begun under the [EDM](#) Initiative. For a long time, students studied in damaged and unsafe classrooms, but the renovation work is now bringing positive change. Soon, the children will have clean, safe, and comfortable classrooms where they can learn and grow in a better environment. This important work is being supported through the CSR initiative of [Muthoot Finance](#), helping create a brighter future for the students of this remote village.



Rebuilding The Classrooms

## From Unsafe to Supportive

Poor sanitation facilities at Sahaganj Dunlop High School had long been affecting students' health and dignity. Recognizing the urgent need for change, a renovation initiative was undertaken to restore hygiene and improve the learning environment for students.

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## The Mangroves Of Edavanakkad In Ernakulum, Kerala

- A story by [Anitha KT](#)

Edavanakkad Panchayat is among the climate change-prone hotspots identified by the State Government due to its high vulnerability to coastal and tidal processes. The Panchayat faces severe sea erosion and recurrent tidal flooding, which has become an almost daily occurrence, adversely affecting households, public infrastructure, livelihoods, and coastal ecosystems. These conditions reflect the growing impacts of climate change and sea-level rise in the region.



Edavakkad During Monsoon Season



Erosion-prone Coastline Needing Mangrove Restoration

To address these challenges, ecosystem-based restoration interventions, particularly mangrove restoration, are urgently required. Mangroves play a crucial role in stabilizing shorelines, and reducing flood impacts, thereby strengthening coastal resilience. The increasing frequency of cyclone alerts and extreme weather events, especially after Cyclone Ockhi (2017), has further intensified flooding and erosion. However, existing natural mangrove patches within the Panchayat have demonstrably reduced flood severity in adjacent areas, highlighting their effectiveness as natural buffers.

The local communities already possessed an understanding of the importance of mangroves in balancing the ecosystem, which resulted in their active participation in the restoration process. The participation of Edavanakkad School students (Young Buds) and the local community. Members in mangrove plantation activities significantly contributed to awareness creation.



Mangroves Planted As Fencing In Edavakkad

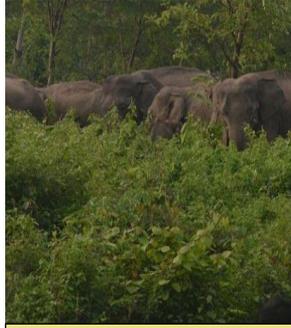


Mangroves Planted At Coastal Areas-2025

However, it noted that the residents only had limited knowledge about the species diversity that existed in the area. Many residents were familiar with the *Rhizophora* species but not much with the other thirteen mangrove species present in the area, leading to their removal from properties, believing they are weeds. This highlighted the need for focused awareness on mangrove species identification and conservation. The Panchayat President and Ward Members understood the importance of the project and provided unwavering support for the mangrove plantation initiatives, which greatly facilitated the community participation and the effective implementation of the programme in Edavanakkad Panchayat.

## Securing the Gentle Giants: Why Elephant Conservation Matters

A recent report highlights the growing crisis of human–elephant conflict in India, driven largely by shrinking forests and expanding human settlements. As natural habitats decline, elephant herds are increasingly forced to move through agricultural lands and villages, leading to rising conflicts and casualties in several states. This situation underscores the importance of initiatives like WNE India’s “Securing the Gentle Giants” project, which aims to promote elephant conservation, habitat protection, and community awareness. By encouraging coexistence and safeguarding elephant landscapes, the project seeks to reduce conflict while protecting one of India’s most important keystone species that helps maintain healthy forest ecosystems.



Gentle Giants Passing

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## Improving Facilities and Hygiene for Students

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Completion Renovation of Toilet

The renovation focused on restoring the school’s sanitation facilities, which had been in poor condition for years. Clean and functional toilets are essential for students’ health, dignity, and regular attendance in school. Along with sanitation improvements, partial classroom renovation was also carried out to create a safer and more supportive learning environment for the students of Sahaganj Dunlop High School (H.S.), Bandel. This initiative was implemented under the [EDM](#) Initiative and supported through the CSR funding of Muthoot Finance, helping improve essential infrastructure for students.

## Tree Enumeration at Borjora

We conducted a tree enumeration across 60 hectares of forest land at the Barjora (N) Coal Mine area. Our team, along with Forest Department staff, documented tree species and their endemicity to ensure that mature and ecologically significant trees are not harmed during mining activities. This landscape is crucial as it supports Asian Elephants, diverse rural wildlife, and several endemic tree species of West Bengal.



Assessment Of Tree Species And Enumeration

# UNMASKING PURULIA

The Soul of the Hills resides here.

Discover the ancient rhythms, tribal heritage, and the artistry of Chhau

THE MUSEUM AT AJODHYA JOHAR PARK

Telliavasa

## From Fear to Coexistence: The Sarpa Sathi Initiative

In Mysore, Karnataka, our dedicated [Sarpa Sathi Mohammed Umar](#) has been actively working to protect both people and wildlife through his remarkable snake rescue efforts. Responding to calls from residential areas, agricultural fields, and institutions, Umar has successfully rescued more than 500 snakes, ensuring that these often-misunderstood reptiles are safely relocated to their natural habitats instead of being harmed. Human–snake encounters are common in many parts of India, particularly in regions where urban areas overlap with natural habitats. In such situations, fear and misinformation often lead to the killing of snakes. Through his calm approach, quick response, and deep understanding of snake behavior, Umar plays a crucial role in preventing such incidents while ensuring the safety of local communities. Beyond rescue operations, Umar is deeply involved in awareness and education programs. He regularly conducts community outreach sessions, school programs, and demonstrations to help people understand the ecological importance of snakes.



i) Awareness Program  
ii,iii) Rescuing Cobra

These sessions focus on identifying common snake species, explaining the difference between venomous and non-venomous snakes, and addressing long-standing myths and misconceptions associated with them. Snakes are vital for maintaining ecological balance, particularly as natural controllers of rodent populations, which helps protect crops and reduce disease risks. By spreading knowledge and encouraging responsible responses to snake encounters, Umar's work is gradually transforming fear into understanding. Through dedication, courage, and compassion, Md. Umar's efforts under the Sarpa Sathi initiative are helping build a culture of coexistence between people and wildlife, proving that conservation begins with awareness and action at the community level.

## Agroforestry and Bana Bandhu

Agroforestry—growing crops alongside trees—is helping restore degraded lands in the Amazon while improving farmers' livelihoods. This nature-based approach rebuilds forest ecosystems and promotes sustainable income for rural communities. The model reflects the vision of WNE India's [Bana Bandhu](#) project, which encourages Agro-ecological practices, native plantations, and sustainable cultivation among forest-edge communities, showing how conservation and community wellbeing can progress together.



Nature-Based Farming

## Total Station Survey in Amta, Howrah



Total Station Survey

We, in collaboration with the Irrigation Department, has begun work to improve flood resilience in Amta, Howrah. As the first step toward building a new bridge and sluice gate to improve drainage and water management, a Total Station survey has been conducted in the area.

## Caged for Profit: Why Wildlife Farming Must End in Kenya

A recent report by World Animal Protection highlights the cruelty of commercial wildlife farming in Kenya, where animals are bred and confined for profit—from meat and skins to tourist attractions. Lions, primates, and other species suffer in cramped enclosures, deprived of natural habitats and social bonds. The practice threatens biodiversity, increases disease risks, and treats wildlife as commodities. Conservationists are urging the Kenyan government to end wildlife farming and promote community-led conservation and responsible ecotourism instead.



Caged For Profit: Wildlife Suffering In Kenya's Commercial Farms.

## Darkening Oceans: A Hidden Threat to Marine Life



The Hidden Impact Of Ocean Darkening On Marine Life.

Scientists warn that large parts of the world's oceans are gradually losing sunlight. Over the past two decades, more than 20% of the global ocean has darkened, shrinking the sunlit zone that supports marine life. Nearly 90% of marine species depend on this light-rich layer for survival. As oceans darken, ecosystems are disrupted, affecting coral reefs, fish populations, and ocean balance. Climate change, warming seas, and shifting ocean circulation are key drivers of this growing threat.

## Rare Great Indian Bustard Spotted After Two Decades



Rare Bustard of Rajasthan

A Great Indian Bustard, one of the world's most critically endangered birds, has been spotted in Barmer, Rajasthan after nearly 20 years. The rare sighting was confirmed through camera traps in restored grasslands of the region. Conservationists see this as a hopeful sign that habitat restoration efforts are helping the species recover. With fewer than a few hundred birds left in the wild, experts say continued protection of grasslands and careful monitoring are crucial for the survival of this iconic species.

## Rediscovery of 'Extinct' Marsupials in New Guinea

Scientists have rediscovered two marsupial species in the rainforests of West Papua that were long believed to be extinct—the pygmy long-fingered possum and a rare ring-tailed glider. The finding, confirmed through photographs and scientific records, highlights the hidden biodiversity of remote tropical forests. However, increasing logging activities threaten these fragile habitats, making conservation efforts crucial to protect these unique species.



Lost Marsupials Found Again

