



Since 1992
Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra,
Chiplun

SAHYADRI NISARGA MITRA
ANNUAL REPORT
2017-18



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माझं जंगल
लोकसहभागातून
जंगल संवर्धन



Acknowledgement

Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra is thankful to Forest Department, Maharashtra for extending support in all programs and also Police Department. We would also like to thank ICICI Bank Pvt. Ltd., BNHS & all the Schools for their support in the E-mammal project. Global Giving has been supportive in Eye donation, Body donation, My Jungle & Save Pangolin projects. In addition, the local Gram Panchayats in each village and, villagers and all the volunteers have worked to ensure the large-scale success of conservation programs. The contribution of Mr. Chandrshekhhar Bhadsavale, Agriculture Department, Filmcity Corporation, Sevavardhini & Dr. Badrish Kulhalli as well as GIZ, Ashirvadam Trust, Saba software, Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education, WCT in our projects was also tremendously important for us.

The support of individual donors has always been the back bone of our activities. Thanks to all known and unknown supporters.

About Us

Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra (SNM) was born when a few likeminded people wanted to do more than sigh away their pangs of conscience about the rampant abuse of nature. The day was 12th February 1992. Out of the brain storming of these individuals, the aim to "Broaden the vision of nature conservation" was taken up as the mission of this organization.

‘ठेवू दूरदृष्टी रक्षू निसर्ग सृष्टी’ (For a better future, we shall protect the nature) was the slogan taken up and till date, SNM has been continuously striving to live up to the slogan. Conservation of Indian Swiftlets, White-bellied sea eagles, Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher, Mangroves were the areas where we worked in the initial days.

We have built a strong base of volunteers spread across Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts of Maharashtra. We frequently undertake orientation sessions for the volunteers. We are also focused on continuously expanding the network of volunteers across the coastal region of Maharashtra. We are also active for conducting environmental outreach programmes for the general public belonging to all age – groups.

Presently, we are working on a project titled ‘E-mammal a citizen science project’ in collaboration with BNHS and ICICI Bank Pvt. Ltd. We are rigorously working for the protection and conservation of Indian Pangolin in the entire Konkan region. Simultaneously, we are introducing, training and widely propagating a low-input, zero-till, high yielding rice cultivation technique to the farmers in the Konkan region. We are also in talks for purchasing a 25 acre of private land for participatory forest conservation through the project of ‘My Jungle’.

Pangolin Conservation

Pangolin is the most trafficked mammal in the illegal wildlife trade. This illicit trade is also spread in Konkan region which came into light through intermittent cases of seizures of large amounts of Pangolin scales. Hence, we initiated conservation efforts on the Indian Pangolin in January 2016. We are intensively surveying the entire Konkan region for ascertaining the present status and study the ecology of this lesser known small mammal. At the beginning, a survey of entire Chiplun block with 165 revenue villages was conducted. Further to this, villages in the entire Khed and Guhagar blocks of Ratnagiri district are being visited. Individuals have been interviewed in these two blocks. These interactions are helping to identify local knowledgeable individuals who provide details on the sites

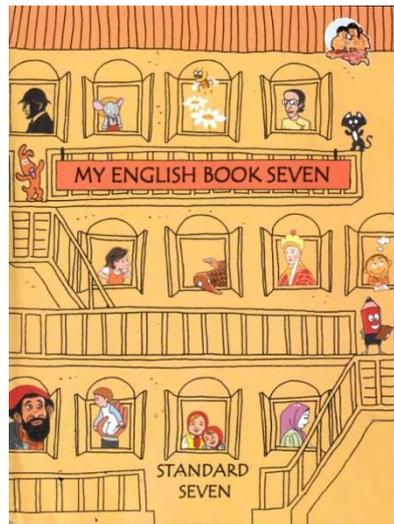
with Pangolin activity. We have identified 30 such local community members. 30 trap cameras have been deployed and are monitored regularly at places wherein Pangolin activity is noticed through secondary indicators. As of March 2018, Pangolin activity has been recorded for 52 times across 17 locations in 2918 camera days. Along with extensive research, we are also conducting awareness activities to sensitize the local community for Pangolin Conservation activities. So far, 90 boards having the message of 'Save Pangolin' have been displayed in Chiplun, Khed and Guhagar blocks. On occasion of the World Pangolin Day, awareness cum sensitization workshop was conducted at Chikhli in Guhagar on 17th February 2018 for the general public as well as frontline staff of the Police Department and State Forest Department. An awareness rally led by school children was followed by drawing and essay competitions for them. The workshop was supported by the Maharashtra State Forest Department and the State Police Department. Later, the villagers were informed about the Indian Pangolin, the threats they are facing along with the offences and consequences mentioned in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. About 150 people from 121 villages, officials of the State Forest Department and officials of the Police Department were present for this meet.

We also had an opportunity to interact with international experts from the scientific community working for the conservation of mammals at the International Mammological Congress held in Perth, Western Australia in July 2017. A video presentation by Bhau Katdare focused on the ongoing conservation ventures for the Indian Pangolin was presented. Bhau Katdare is now entitled to the membership of the IUCN-SSC's Pangolin Specialist Group on Pangolin Conservation till 2020. We are now getting inputs from the international experts to further escalate the conservation efforts.



Various activities conducted under the Pangolin Conservation Program

We recently conducted visits to a few villages in Chiplun taluka to review the level of awareness in the local community. Increased awareness levels were observed in the citizens. Besides, more and new individuals are now getting involved and are showing additional locations for setting and monitoring of camera traps. This has gradually led to increased incidences of capturing Pangolin footage from the wild at locations which previously negated for Pangolin presence in their vicinity. We now aim to survey the entire Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts, record and monitor Pangolin activities at all possible locations probably having Pangolin activities, study its habitat and undertake more rigorous awareness activities for its conservation.



Cover page of the textbook having a chapter on Pangolin

The authorities of Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education requested Shri. Bhau Katdare to pen a chapter for the middle school curriculum. A chapter on Pangolin and the need for its conservation is now incorporated for the students of 7th standard. The textbook has an estimated outreach to 1.6 million students per year.

E-Mammal – A Citizen Science Project

SNM in collaboration with Bombay Natural History Society and with the financial support of ICICI Bank Ltd. is implementing E-mammal –A Citizen Science Project since February 2017. The project will continue till January 2019. The project aims to promote scientific understanding among school children between the ages of 11 to 14 through the lens of applied scientific research between middle schools, for which 20 rural/tribal schools across seven districts located in the Sahyadri region are involved. The project involves use of camera traps to document animal population sizes, animal diversity and habitat use in their corresponding regions. A state level orientation workshop was organized at Chiplun on 1st April 2017. 40 students and 20 teachers representing 20 schools attended the workshop proceedings. The workshop also provided training on how to use trap camera and other electronic equipment's. A laptop, an LCD projector, 3 Trap cameras and an Internet dongle were also handed over to each participating school. In addition, a measuring tape, three metal protective cases for trap cameras, 6 memory cards (each of 16 GB capacity), batteries for the

cameras, HDMI Cable and 6 locks and safety chains for the cameras were also handed over at the same time.

Later, a pre-project assessment survey was conducted in each of the schools. Each of the schools was then visited by the project staff to address the issues faced by the schools while deploying camera traps.

Since, it was not possible to deploy cameras and record activities during the monsoons, the schools were asked to take them off and keep them safely. Meanwhile, various competitions and awareness activities were conducted during this season. A drawing competition was conducted in July 2017 for the students of standard 8th and 9th. The theme of this competition was 'Wildlife around my neighbourhood'. An essay writing competition was also held in August 2017. The topic for this was 'The Wild Animal that I have seen'.



Glimpses of the painting and essay competitions conducted at various schools

The Wildlife Week was celebrated in the last week of September 2017. Documentaries on the rich biodiversity our region harbours and the threats it is facing were the areas of prime focus highlighted. All schools also witnessed an awareness program on snakes found in the local region. During these sessions, the students were informed about general misconceptions about the snakes, physical appearance of different kinds of snakes found in the vicinity, their uses, different species of snakes found in India, their importance in the ecosystem, distinguishing between venomous and non-venomous snakes, measures to be taken after accidental snake bites etc. In order to instill a sense of concern for the natural world and inspire the students to imbibe concern for conservation, a quiz competition was also organized. About 936 students from 8th standard and 1058 students from 9th standard participated enthusiastically in all the activities conducted during the trap camera shutdown.



Celebration of the Wildlife Week (L) and snake awareness programmes (R) conducted across various schools

The officials of the ICICI Bank visited two participant schools in November 2017. The students presented a glimpse of all the activities conducted throughout. They also demonstrated installation of trap cameras in the wild. The students also summarized their experiences on enhancement of knowledge and other technical skills.

About 1994 school children with their teachers are enthusiastically participating in this project. A deployment datasheet is being collected from the all participant schools to upload the photos online. The photos captured by the trap cameras are being uploaded on the e-mammal website, which forms the repository which is being used by global scientists.



Various mammals encountered by the trap cameras at different schools

Saguna Rice Technique (SRT)

We chanced upon an innovative rice cultivation technique viz. Saguna Rice Technique (SRT) which will further facilitate in the ongoing Pangolin Conservation activities by reducing the rate of deforestation and protecting its natural habitat. We introduced this low-input, zero-till, low-emission and climate smart rice cultivation technique pioneered by Chandrashekhar Bhadsawale at Saguna Baug, Neral, district Raigad, Maharashtra. It eliminates all the tedious processes involved in paddy cultivation and uses fewer amounts of chemical fertilizers and pesticides as compared to the traditional technique, thus minimizing the input costs. The technique is advantageous on two more grounds as compared with the traditional technique. Firstly, it yields 2-3 times more produce and secondly it can withstand in the adverse climatic conditions.

A farmer's meet was organized on 17th September 2017 at Madhav Sabhagruh, Chiplun to make them familiar with this technique. About 80 farmers from villages were present for this meet.

As a follow-up activity, a workshop was organized on 27th December 2017 in the premises of the village temple of Waloti in Chiplun taluka. This workshop was delivered by Shri. Rajendra Humare, the Project Officer for SRT. It detailed on the methods and the procedures of this technique. About 30 farmers from Waloti village participated in this workshop. A documentary screening was followed by an interactive session with the farmers. By the end, all the farmers were convinced for adopting this technique for rice cultivation.

This technique is being widely propagated and as of now 28 farmers from 5 villages from Chiplun block have entered into this joint venture of SNM and Saguna Baug. A total area of 5 acres has been brought under rice cultivation through this technique since April 2017. The first season witnessed an average production of 2.09 ton/acre of rice which is almost 2 times than the previous year's production.



Awareness workshop conducted for SRT (L) and a rice field of a local farmer in Dugave who opted for SRT for the first time (R)

Vulture Conservation (Ashirvadam Trust)

The Konkan region harbours two species Vultures viz. *Gyps bengalensis* and *Gyps indicus*. A drastic decline in their numbers led to implementation of Vulture Conservation efforts in the entire Konkan region since 2013. Ashirvadam Trust, Bangalore supported the vulture conservation efforts from Sept 2016 to dec 2017. The following activities were conducted during this project: Monitoring and protection of 56 active nests of vultures viz. White-backed vultures at Shrivardhan (21) & Chirgaon (13) and Long-billed vultures at Nanemachi (4), Ranawadi (2) Vihali (4) and Patnus (12)

1. Orientation of local community rangers for regularly monitoring vulture nesting and feeding activities at dedicated vulture feeding grounds
2. Compensation for 8 coconut plantation owners at Shrivardhan for foregoing the produce to maintain the vulture nests
3. Regular field visits to vulture nesting grounds and feeding grounds wherein dead cattle is disposed off in open
4. Informal interactions with the local community in the target villages on conservation of vultures and safety measures for disposal of dead cattle at the identified vulture feeding sites
5. Distribution of awareness leaflets on 'Save Vultures'
6. Installation of posters having the message of Vulture Conservation at various places in vulture nesting and feeding sites



Vultures feeding on a dead cow at Devhare (L) and informal interactions with the locals on vulture conservation (R)

My Jungle

SNM initiated the project of 'My Jungle' in February 2015. In order to protect the native biological diversity by collaborating with local citizens, interested organizations and corporate agencies, a 100 acre privately owned forest land in vicinity of Sahyadri Mountain Ranges will be purchased. It will be developed and maintained to instill a sense of conservation among the people at large. It will also develop such self-motivated pockets of forest, both in quality and number. Such forests will be open to all nature lovers.

People will be expected to shoulder the responsibility of conservation, monitoring and documentation. Local people will also be engaged in conservation activities through SNM's principle

of 'Livelihood generation through Nature Conservation'. We have urged the local people to contribute generously in order to purchase the land. To begin with, we would now be focusing for the conservation of 25 acre land.

Eye Donation Body Donation And Blood Donation,

In India 1% of blind people are bilaterally corneal blind out of which only approximately 60,000 can be delivered vision by penetrating keratoplasty. Rest 50% cannot be provided vision due to associated involvement of posterior segment. Considering annual addition of 20,000 fresh cases of corneal blindness, maximum utilization of collected corneas and back log of corneal blindness, India needs approximately 140,000 eye donors as of today against 40,621 cornea collections as per National Programme for Control of Blindness's Survey.

27 actual eye donation & 6 body donation have done till the year end. Special banners with the message of importance of blood donation have been designed and are displayed during all the camps. A documentary highlighting the importance of all three activities is also screened continuously.

World Eye-Donation Day was celebrated on 8th September 2017 and the relatives of deceased eye-donors were felicitated.



The Federation of Organ and Body Donation based in Mumbai held a walkathon from Mumbai to Goa which was conducted during 23rd February 2017 to 17th April 2017. We collaborated with them for the Chiplun chapter of this run. A batch of 10 people from SNM participated with this walkathon team from Lote to Chiplun. They arrived in Chiplun on 18th March 2018. This was followed by a short program emphasizing the need for body and organ donation. The members visited 52 villages from Mumbai to Goa for spreading the awareness during the entire period and reached more than 500 people.

Appeal

It is not possible to complete these projects without donations. SNM appeals donors to check the details on the website and contribute generously towards a noble cause. Donations made within India will be entitled for IT exemption under 80G. Foreign donations are now accepted. Kindly call us for the details.

Donations

For Online Donation visit :

Indian Doners : <https://www.payumoney.com/paybypayumoney/#/142123>

Foreign Doners : <https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/my-jungle-participatory-forest-conservation/>

Account holder's name: Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra (for Indian donors only)

Name of Bank: Bank of India, Chiplun	Name of Bank: Bank of Maharashtra, Chiplun
Account Number: 141110110000077	Account Number: 20061344941
IFSC: BKID0001411	IFSC: MAHB0000296