

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-25

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WCB RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Adding Science to Conservation

Wildlife and Conservation Biology (WCB) Research Foundation is a Non-profit organization registered with Government of India established in September 2020. The foundation is established with the goal of accelerating action-oriented research and enhances the capacity of students for research and development in the field of wildlife and conservation biology. We are committed to science-based conservation and outreach activities through research and development.

The major thrust areas of research at WCB are mammalian ecology and behavior, habitat evaluation and modeling, wetland biology and monitoring, biodiversity monitoring and environmental biotechnology. We are also engaged in consultancy work such as biodiversity monitoring, soil and water testing and green audits.

Since the establishment of the WCB Research Foundation, we have had many interns and dissertation students. We offer and encourage exchange programmes with organizations and institutes with similar interests and open for bilateral programmes related to wildlife and conservation biology.

Currently we have several ongoing research and conservation projects in different parts of the Gujarat state. Our future goal is to encourage young students to make their career in the field of wildlife and conservation and enhance the capacity through training and workshops. Apart from this, we publish scholarly research articles and observations focused on the field of wildlife and conservation biology in our triannual journal "Prithivya". We are also engaged in community services such as wildlife rescue, plantation, science-based restoration and biodiversity monitoring and assessment.

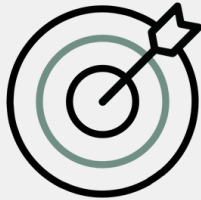


VISION

॥ आत्मवत् सर्वभूतेषु यः पश्यति स पण्डितः ॥

जो सब प्राणी को स्वयं की भाँति (आत्मवत्) देखता है वही पंडित है ।

The one who sees every creature of nature as his own (self-self) is the real scholar



MISSION

To conserve the wildlife and natural resources through science-based research and to create the community of practice by enhancing capacity of conservation professionals

OBJECTIVES

- Conservation education and awareness
- Wildlife and habitat research
- Assisting policy makers and wildlife managers
- Implementing innovative conservation actions on ground
- Capacity building through professional training and scientific gathering

DIRECTORS



Dr. Nishith Dharaiya
Founder, Hon. Director of Research



Mr. Pratikkumar Desai
Co-founder, Director of Operations

ADVISORY BOARD

11

LIFE MEMBERS

19

TRI-ANNUAL MEMBERS

7

TEAM MEMBERS

06

MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR

We are pleased to present the 2024–25 Annual Report, highlighting our key achievements and ongoing initiatives that reflect WCB Research Foundation’s commitment to science-based conservation. Guided by our strategic vision, “Adding Science to Conservation,” this year’s efforts underscore our dedication to integrating research, community engagement, and education for meaningful conservation outcomes.

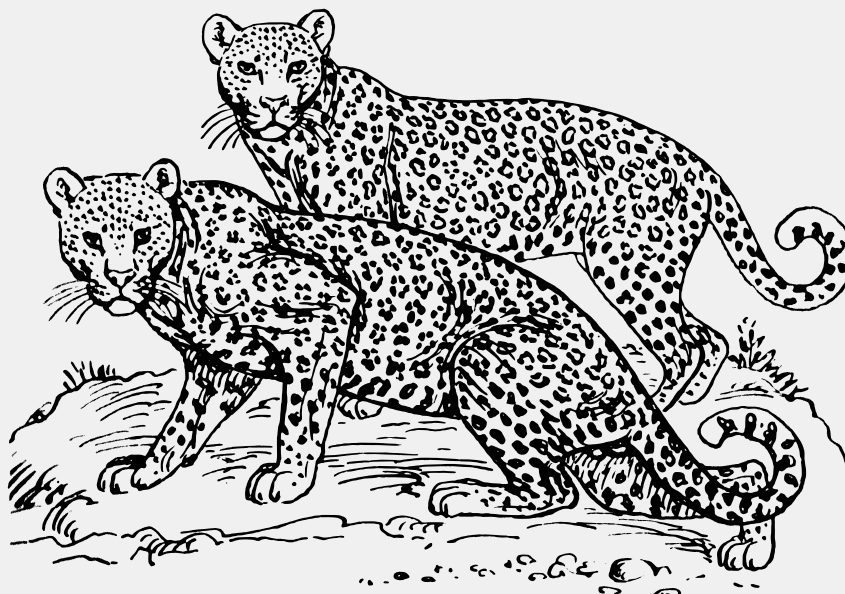
Our progress is a collective accomplishment—made possible through the unwavering support of our partners, members, and collaborators. With inclusivity and partnership at the core of our mission, we continue to set ambitious goals that strengthen WCB’s contribution to wildlife conservation, research, and capacity building.

This report reflects our focus on fostering a community of practice through training programmes, enhancing public awareness through outreach and education, and empowering local communities to play an active role in conservation. By working collaboratively across regions, we aim to maximize impact and build a united network of conservation practitioners.

As we move forward, WCB remains a voice for wildlife and people sharing the same landscapes. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all supporters, donors, partners, staff, and volunteers whose dedication drives our mission. We invite you to explore our diverse activities and development programmes within this report, as we continue our journey toward a future where conservation is rooted in science and shared responsibility.

Dr. Nishith Dharaiya

Founder, Hon. Director of Research



OUR KEY DONORS & SUPPORTERS



RECOGNITIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- Dr. Nishith Dharaiya, Founder and Hon. Director of Research at WCBRF, was honored with the IBA President's Award 2024 by the International Association for Bear Research and Management, USA, on September 21, 2024, at a conference in Edmonton, Canada. The award acknowledges his remarkable contributions to science-based bear conservation.
- Dr. Swapnil Sonone, a Life Member of WCB, was awarded the Green Warrior Award 2024 by the Wildlife & Environment Conservation Society, Amravati, on October 5, 2024, for his outstanding work in environmental and wildlife conservation. As an Ayurvedacharya, he has played a crucial role in mitigating human-wildlife conflicts and supporting the Maharashtra Forest Department during critical wildlife incidents.
- Ms. Sakhi Dabhi, Leader of the Sloth Bear Microbiology Project was appointed as a member of the IBA Student Council on May 19, 2024, representing Asia in international bear conservation efforts.
- Ms. Bhagyashri Dangar, a member of WCB, was officially recognized as a member of the IUCN Bryophyte Specialist Group on June 15, 2024 for her contributions to bryophyte research and conservation.
- Dr. Nuria Selva, advisor of WCB, received the Ilkka Hanski European Distinguished Service Award from the Society for Conservation Biology at ECCB 2024 in Bologna on June 22, 2024 for her scientific work, advocacy for the Białowieża Forest, and contributions to the Roadless Initiative.
- Ms. Keren Pereira, a committed Member and Project Fellow of WCB, was appointed as a Member of the IUCN SSC Sloth Bear Expert Team on July 24, 2024. Her knowledge and expertise will significantly contribute to global sloth bear conservation initiatives.
- Dr. Jagruti Rathod, a life member of WCB, was appointed as the Minute Secretary of the Section Natural (NRN-SER) Regeneration Network under the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) on July 30, 2024. Additionally, she was named Asian Membership Coordinator, recognizing her dedication to ecological restoration and conservation initiatives.
- Mr. Shailesh Desai, a Ph.D. student at the Department of Zoology, Banaras Hindu University, and a valued member of WCBRF, received travel support from SERB on August 12, 2024, to attend summer courses on high-throughput data in Population Genetics at Copenhagen University, Denmark.

GRANTS/SUPPORT

- Mr. Sarthak Chaudhary, a WCB member and PhD scholar at Saurashtra University, Rajkot, received first WCB Research Grant to support his work on Sloth bear denning ecology (September, 2024)
- Dr. Utkarsh Prajapati, a WCB member, was awarded a research grant from Bears in Mind to support his impactful work in sloth bear conservation in Rajasthan (November, 2024).
- Mr. Mayank Judal, a Ph.D. scholar at the Department of Zoology, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, and WCB member, received a grant from The Rufford Foundation to support his vital research on vulture conservation (January, 2025).
- Ms. Bhagyashri Dangar, a Ph.D. scholar at Bhakta Kavi Narsinh Mehta University, Junagadh and WCB member, received instrumental support from IDEA WILD to aid in her bryophyte research (March, 2025).



ONGOING PROJECTS

SLOTH BEAR CONSERVATION

॥ आत्मवत् सर्वभूतेषु ॥



“Aatmavat Sarvabhuteshu” is an initiative by Wildlife and Conservation Biology (WCB) Research Foundation to save the sloth bears in India through science based research and conservation actions including community outreach and education programs. Our approach is to develop two-way communication including all perspectives to evolve the fine quality of knowledge and disseminate it to spread true science. The sloth bear attacks are increasing since the last decade and it is still prevalent mostly in central and western India, which has made people hostile and intolerant. Hence our goal is to increase the tolerance among people for the presence of sloth bears in their vicinity. In this project we link sentiments with conservation under which several activities are being taken up.

Along with outreach and education, we are also conducting scientific research on various aspects of sloth bear ecology such as movement patterns, habitat occupancy, food and feeding ecology, microbiology and physiology to understand population health. The project is supported by several national and international organizations and individuals.

Our Goal

Saving the sloth bears of India through habitat protection, promoting human-bear coexistence and action research.

Our Strength

A dedicated team of researchers and conservation with expertise in science-based conservation, community partnership and global networking.

Our Impact

Reduced the sloth bear attacks significantly through conservation actions and restore the critical sloth bear habitats in Western India.

HABITAT ASSESSMENT & CORRIDOR EVALUATION

More than 85% of the sloth bear population occurs in India in highly degraded and fragmented habitat and which leads to human-sloth bear conflict. While protected sloth bear habitats are studied well, sloth bear ranges in non-protected areas have dearth of information and research. Sloth bear is not a media darling and because most of the attention is taken by the charismatic mammals like lion, tiger, elephant and rhino in India. The present research aims to study habitat quality, movement of sloth bear and human-sloth bear conflicts in non-protected areas of western India. It is felt that the findings of this research would lighten up the status of sloth bear and its habitat and helpful in formulating conservation and management strategies focusing on sloth bear conservation and mitigating human-bear conflicts.



EDUCATION & OUTREACH

In Gujarat, human-sloth bear conflict is common in regions where tribal communities live close to bear habitats. To address this, the WCB Research Foundation launched the “Aatamavat Sarvabhuteshu” project in 2019, promoting coexistence through education, community engagement, and forest staff training. The initiative, which began in central Gujarat, focuses on awareness, safety, and changing perceptions. From December 2023, it will expand across western India with new educational materials and preventive measures—encouraging communities to live safely alongside sloth bears.

CONSERVATION ACTIONS

WCB Research Foundation launched a conservation action project. This project includes several conservation actions such as creating water accumulation structures, designing and distributing tools to deter sloth bears, clean-up of sloth bear habitats and plantation of fruiting trees in the degraded sloth bears areas.

Creation of water accumulation structures

The project uses hydrological modelling to identify potential water accumulation sites and construct structures that retain rainwater for longer periods. These water sources provide essential relief for sloth bears and other wildlife during dry seasons. Since water scarcity often drives sloth bears into villages and farms in search of water—leading to increased human–bear conflicts—such structures can play a vital role in reducing encounters and promoting safer coexistence.

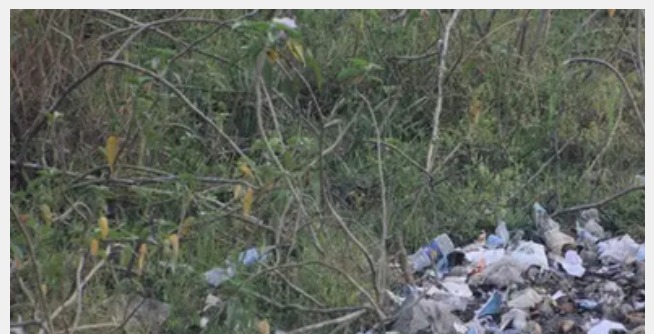


“Ghanti Kathi”: A bear deterrent stick

The “Ghanti Kathi” is a bear deterrent stick developed using traditional knowledge as a non-lethal safety tool against wild animals like sloth bears and leopards. It produces sound while being carried, alerting animals to human presence, while its blunt spikes provide protection if an animal approaches too closely. Combining sound-based and physical deterrence, this tool offers a practical and humane way to prevent dangerous wildlife encounters.

Sloth bear Habitat Cleaning

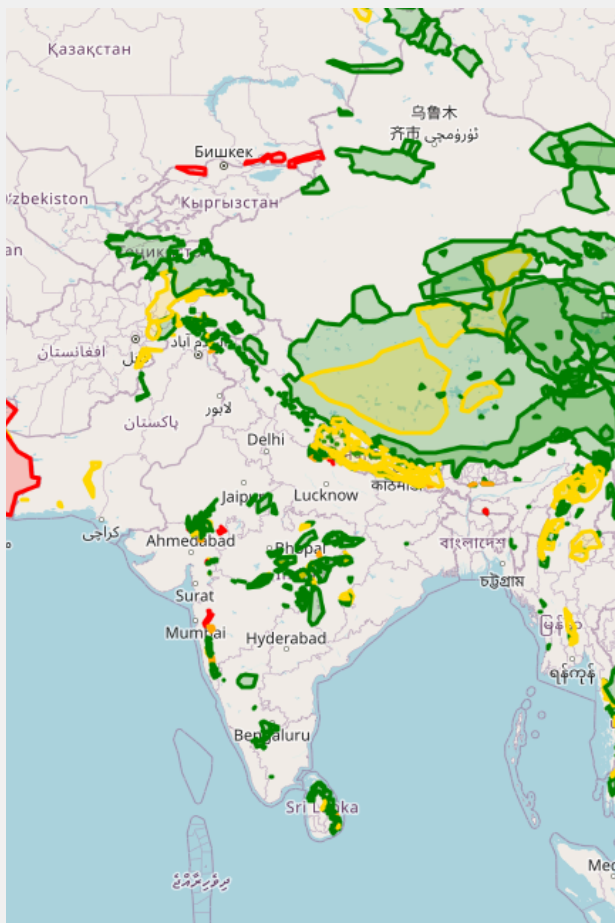
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SLOTH BEAR MICROBIOLOGY

Gut microflora of Sloth bear

The gut microbiota (GMB) of an animal plays a vital role to their health and nutrition. Sloth bears are myrmecophagous in nature which differentiate them from other bear species. The diversity and function of their gut microbiota are not well studied. One of our members, Ms Sakhi is conducting her research on the sloth bear microbiology, which is a pioneer study to investigate the gut microbial diversity in sloth bears. This research will provide some very imperative information that can help to understand the nutrition and health status of sloth bear population.



ASIAN BEAR MAPPING PROJECT – SLOTH BEAR RANGE MAPPING

The IUCN-SSC Bear Specialist Group (BSG) and the Smithsonian Institution are leading the Mapping of Asian Bears project, covering four bear species across 33 Asian countries. In India, the WCB Research Foundation and Wildlife SOS are spearheading the mapping of the Sloth bear's range. This initiative updates earlier range maps from 2006 and 2016 for the upcoming 2026 IUCN Red List assessments. With a growing team of 32 members, the project aims to strengthen collaboration and generate reliable distribution data. It also seeks to build a network of experts and organizations to share verified presence records via a dedicated website. Additionally, on-ground information on Sloth bears in India is being gathered through an open online questionnaire for anyone with relevant observations.

HUMAN-SLOTH BEAR CONFLICTS

Human-Sloth bear conflict Analysis

Human-sloth bear conflicts are evaluated and assessed through secondary information to understand the patterns and trend of conflicts across the sloth bear landscape.

Interviews of Victims

Our team is actively engaging with the local people and the victims of sloth bear attacks. We visit and interview the victims and locals to understand the sloth bear attack situation and to gain the first-hand knowledge.. This will help us to understand the perception of people about sloth bears and formulating conflict mitigation strategies using local knowledge.

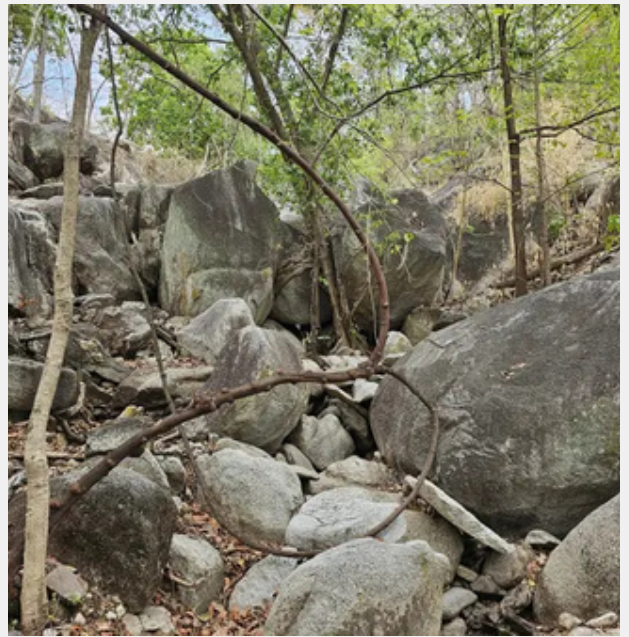
Economic assessment of Human -Sloth bear conflicts

Assessing the social and economic impacts of sloth bear attacks is crucial for developing effective mitigation strategies. These incidents have both direct and indirect consequences for local economies. Direct costs include medical expenses that burden households with limited healthcare access, while crop and livestock losses affect rural livelihoods. Indirectly, fear of bear attacks can reduce tourism—a key income source. Thus, addressing these impacts requires sustainable solutions that mitigate conflict while protecting both wildlife and community livelihoods.



DENNING ECOLOGY OF SLOTH BEARS

Sloth bears generally use naturally occurring caves for denning purposes. They use these dens mainly, to rest (resting dens) and to give litter (maternal den). The present study aims to understand the denning patterns of Sloth bear and to understand how they choose their shelter for different purposes. This research is also focused on studying den characteristics along with different habitat gradients, physical features of the den and their impacts on the denning preference of Sloth bear. The project is supported by the IUCN -SSC Bear Specialist Group.



SLOTH BEAR FORAGING BEHAVIOUR

This study focuses on the myrmecophagy of sloth bears, examining their foraging behaviour and dietary preferences. Sloth bears are unique among bear species due to their specialized adaptation to feed on ants, termites, and other insects. This research investigates how sloth bears locate, select, and exploit these food resources across varying seasons and habitats. It also delves into their food preferences by quantifying the availability and distribution, assessing the characteristics and phenology, and analysing the nutritional value of the sloth bear food. By understanding these patterns, the study aims to reveal crucial insights into the sloth bear's foraging strategies, dietary needs, and ecological adaptations. These findings will contribute significantly to habitat management and conservation strategies, ensuring the protection and sustainability of sloth bears.

LEOPARD CONSERVATION PROJECT



This Project is focused on conserving leopards in Gujarat state, where leopards share their habitat with Asiatic lions, sloth bears as well as Humans. The project entails identifying and mapping the resources utilized by leopards, including food, water, and habitat. Employing GIS tools, the project aims to suggest habitat suitability and model conflict risk zones. Moreover, it seeks to identify critical leopard movement corridors, especially in fragmented forest areas, which is crucial for future management and mitigating human-leopard conflicts. This project plays a fundamental role in ensuring the long-term survival of leopards and fostering harmonious coexistence with human population.



SCAVENGERS PROJECT



Scavengers provide critical ecological services by recycling nutrients and controlling disease spread, yet their dynamics in human-dominated landscapes remain poorly understood. This project investigates vertebrate scavenging on livestock carcasses across Gujarat. Through camera trap monitoring, we assess feeding interactions to understand competition and coexistence at carcass sites. Complementary social surveys explore local perceptions, carcass disposal practices, and attitudes toward scavengers. By integrating ecological and social insights, the project aims to guide effective conservation strategies, and strengthen waste management systems. The project is supported by The Rufford Foundation.





ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

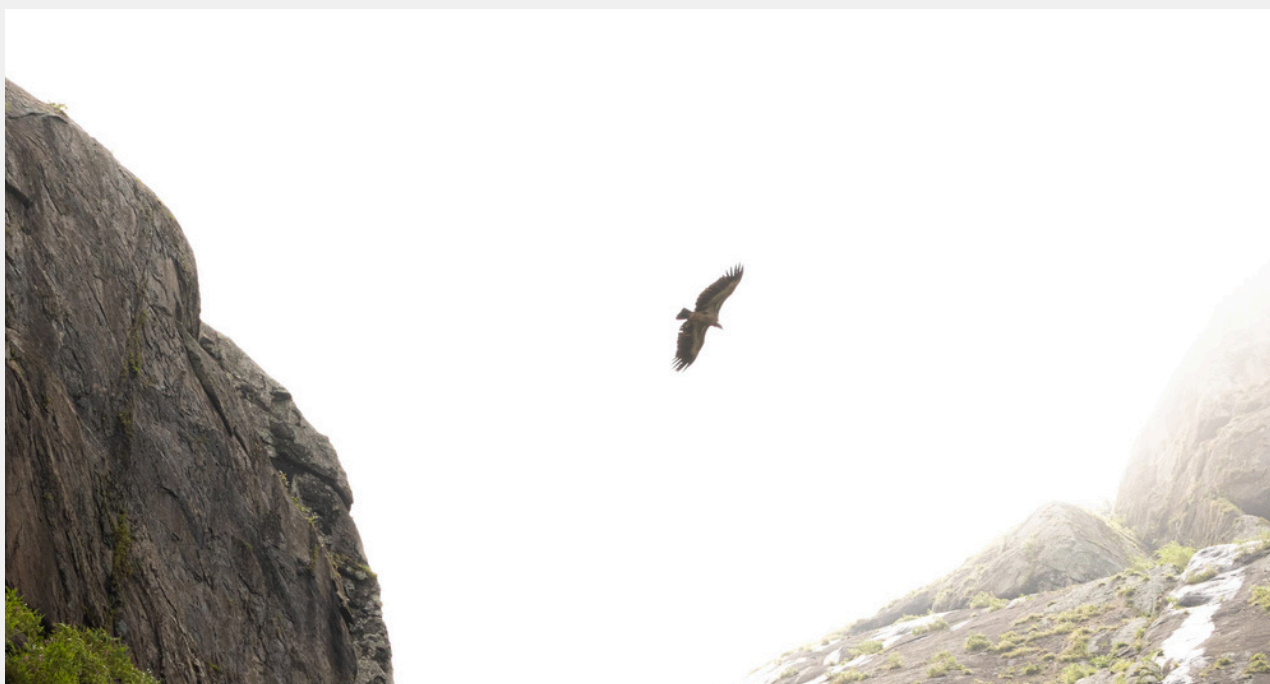
CELEBRATING WORLD SNAKE DAY

On the occasion of World Snake Day, the Department of Life Science, HNG University, Patan, organized an informative lecture highlighting the rich diversity of snake species found across India. The session was conducted by Mr. Pratik Chaudhary, Co-founder and Director of the WCB Research Foundation (WCBRF), who engaged participants with insightful discussions aimed at dispelling common myths surrounding snakes. He also provided practical guidance on snakebite identification and first aid management, equipping attendees with valuable life-saving knowledge. The interactive event witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, fostering scientific curiosity and promoting a more informed and empathetic understanding of snakes and their vital ecological role.



VULTURE WATCH

The Wildlife and Conservation Biology (WCB) Research Foundation, in collaboration with the Centre of Excellence for Wildlife and Conservation Studies (CWCS) at Bhakta Kavi Narsinh Mehta University, organized a “Vulture Watch” event on September 7, 2024, at Girnar Mountain in Junagadh, Gujarat. This event, held on International Vulture Awareness Day, aimed to educate the local community about the vital role of vultures in the ecosystem. The focus species was the Indian Vulture (*Gyps indicus*), also known as “Giranri Gidh”; a critically endangered species facing severe population decline due to habitat loss, poisoning, and food scarcity. Participants had the opportunity to observe vultures in their natural habitat while learning about their ecological significance, conservation challenges, and the importance of protecting them. Experts led engaging discussions on vulture identification, behavior, and threats, providing valuable insights into their role as nature’s cleaning crew. The interactive sessions encouraged discussions on vulture conservation, inspiring young attendees to take an active role in research and protection efforts. The event concluded with certificates of participation and a strong commitment from attendees to support vulture conservation initiatives.



NATIONAL WILDLIFE WEEK

As part of National Wildlife Week (October 2–8, 2024), the WCB Research Foundation organized a series of engaging activities aimed at spreading awareness and fostering conservation values among diverse audiences. The celebrations commenced with an insightful webinar by Dr. Girish Punjabi from the Wildlife Conservation Trust, titled “Conservation in the Anthropocene.” Drawing from over a decade of field research experience, Dr. Punjabi shared thought-provoking perspectives on balancing human development with biodiversity conservation. Throughout the week, WCBRF conducted multiple educational talks and interactive sessions across various schools and colleges, covering topics ranging from the fundamentals of wildlife ecology to advanced aspects of conservation science. Another highlight of the week was a webinar by Mayank Judal on “Pixels with Purpose,” which emphasized how thoughtfully designed digital content can serve as a powerful tool to communicate conservation messages and engage wider audiences effectively. The week-long initiative successfully blended science, creativity, and community outreach to celebrate India’s rich natural heritage.



WORLD SLOTH BEAR DAY

On World Sloth Bear Day, observed on October 12, a special event was held at Polo Forest to celebrate the remarkable sloth bears and raise awareness about their conservation. The gathering brought together forest field staff and local communities, highlighting the collaborative spirit essential for human–bear coexistence. The Directors of the WCB Research Foundation shared valuable insights from ongoing bear research in India, with a particular focus on studies conducted in Sabarkantha, underscoring the significance of community participation in conservation. As part of the initiative, “Ghantikathi” (a bear deterrent stick) were distributed among locals and forest personnel to promote safer practices in areas of human–wildlife interaction. Additionally, volunteers and forest staff joined hands to clean the sloth bear habitat.



WORLD SPARROW DAY

On World Sparrow Day, observed on March 20, the WCB Research Foundation organized an outreach initiative to assess public awareness about the decline of sparrows, the threats they face, and prevailing perceptions of their conservation. Team members took to the streets, engaging with people through interactive discussions and awareness activities. The campaign emphasized simple yet effective ways individuals can contribute—such as planting native trees, providing water sources, and reducing pesticide use—to help restore habitats suitable for sparrows. To complement on-ground efforts, both online and face-to-face questionnaires were conducted to evaluate public knowledge and attitudes toward sparrow conservation. The initiative successfully combined research and outreach to inspire collective action for safeguarding these familiar yet fast-vanishing urban birds.





TRAININGS & WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOP ON “ADVANCING CONSERVATION RESEARCH BY GEOSPATIAL TECHNIQUES”

A five-day workshop on “Advancing Conservation Research through Geospatial Techniques” was jointly organized by the WCB Research Foundation (WCBRF) and the Centre of Excellence for Wildlife and Conservation Studies (CWCS) from May 22 to 26, 2024. The workshop aimed to build participants’ capacity in the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing tools for wildlife research and conservation planning. Sessions covered the fundamentals of GIS, its applications in habitat mapping, species distribution modeling, and landscape-level analysis, and demonstrated how spatial data can inform effective conservation decisions. Participants also gained hands-on experience through practical exercises using real datasets, enhancing their technical proficiency in geospatial analysis. The event successfully brought together students, researchers, and conservation practitioners, fostering knowledge exchange and promoting the integration of spatial technologies into modern conservation research.



PUBLICATIONS



34

Research
Articles



05

Book
Chapters



15

Press/
News



20

Conferences/
Talks

WCB MEMBERSHIP

Whether you are a research scholar, student, or anyone passionate about conservation and research, you can become a WCB Member.

BENEFITS

As a WCB Member, you'll gain access to exclusive benefits:

- Research Paper, Report & Grant Writing Support
- Technical & Academic Assistance from our experts
- Special Discounts on WCB Training, Workshops & Products
- Support for APC for your research publications
- Eligibility for WCB Research Grants
- Take students for Internship and Graduate Research (Only for Regular Membership)

BUDGET MEMBERSHIP

2000 INR
Per Year

REGULAR MEMBERSHIP

5000 INR
Three Year

HOW TO APPLY?

Visit Our Website >> Go to Join Us >> Choose Membership >> Fill out Form

FOR MORE DETAILS

www.wcbresearch.org | wcbresearch@gmail.com | +91 8320519905

WCB RESEARCH GRANT

The WCB Research Grant is designed to support and encourage innovative research in wildlife and conservation. Our goal is to foster future wildlife professionals and researchers, contributing to biodiversity conservation and scientific advancement.

Amount: Up to ₹1,50,000
Duration: Maximum 1 year
Focus: Wildlife and Conservation projects

ELIGIBILITY

- Applicant must be a member of WCBRF
- Minimum postgraduate degree OR relevant field experience
- Only one proposal per grant cycle

IMPORTANT DATES

- Application Period: March 1 to June 30
- Award Announcement: September 10 (WCB Foundation Day)

APPLICATION PROCESS

Download the prescribed format from our website



Write your proposal in English



Submit to wcbresearch@gmail.com



WCB RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Adding Science to Conservation



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Office, Patan (Gujarat), India 384265



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