

A photograph of a mountain goat leaping over a rocky waterfall. The goat is in mid-air, with its body arched and its legs tucked. The waterfall is cascading over dark, jagged rocks, creating white foam and spray. The background is a steep, rocky cliff face. The overall scene is rugged and natural.

# THE MUD ON BOOTS PROJECT

IMPACT REPORT 2020



**THE  
MUD ON BOOTS  
PROJECT**

The Mud on Boots Project is a Sanctuary Nature Foundation programme designed to empower grassroots conservationists across India. Such individuals are identified by the Sanctuary team with support from a reliable network of wildlife conservationists from whom nominations are invited. Over a two-year period, the selected Project Leaders receive a monetary grant and other strategic support from Sanctuary. The Project has been developed to be flexible to the needs of each Project Leader and Sanctuary's support to each one is customised. This ensures that each project develops holistically. Nominations for the Mud on Boots Project are considered on a rolling basis, as and when funds become available.

## Where are our Project Leaders?







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**Bhuvaneshwara H.C**



**LOCATION: HASSAN, DAKSHIN KANNADA AND KODAGU DISTRICTS  
STATE: KARNATAKA**

A firebrand conservationist, Bhuvan works to maintain the ecological integrity of Karnataka's Bisle-Charjadi landscape. Here, he is developing and implementing conservation interventions for four endangered keystone species – the Niligiri marten, lion-tailed macaque, small-clawed otter and Malabar Pied Hornbill. Alongside his work on habitat conservation, he engages with local communities and supports the state Forest Department. Bhuvan's work is guided by Dr. Meghna Krishnadas, a Project Scientist with the Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species, and wildlife researcher Sachin Sridhara.

#### **Human Elephant Conflict Mitigation**

In August 2020, Bhuvan met with the Range Forest Officer of Sullia Range to discuss the issue of human-elephant conflict in Mandekolu village. Mandekolu is considered amongst the top conflict hotspots in the Dakshin Kannada district of Karnataka. He is assisting the Forest Department in their surveillance of wild elephant movement in this area and in implementing a motion sensor alarm system as an experimental mitigation measure.

#### **Preliminary Surveys**

As Project Leader Bhuvaneshwara H.C. slowly but surely expands the scope of his work, his need for data has also increased. In February 2020, Bhuvan conducted preliminary surveys to identify habitats used by lion-tailed macaques and small-clawed otters. Both are threatened, charismatic species, and respectively icons for clean streams and diverse forests. Bhuvan visited sites in Kaginahare, Kempuhole, and Bisle on the basis of anecdotal reports of sightings. Similarly, in April, his exploratory surveys took him on a journey down the Kumaradhara river. Assisted by watersports expert Abhi Mandela, Bhuvan undertook a preliminary survey of the river to assess the distribution of keystone species such as otters and record the threats to their survival. During the six kilometre- downstream and six kilometre upstream survey from Sngahat, Bhuvan's team sighted three freshwater crocodiles, numerous fishing owls, and signs of otter presence. Unfortunately, the downstream segment was found to be heavily polluted, partly by pilgrims. He reported the condition of the river to the Additional District Commissioner, who promised action on the issue. His findings will lay the foundation for future conservation interventions.

#### **Forest Restoration**

In 2018, forest ecologist and Bhuvan's mentor Dr. Meghna Krishnadas identified 38 species of flora in patches that have old growth forest. After a careful survey of various





### Outreach

In January, 2020 Bhuvan was invited as the chief guest at a forest fire information program organised by the Forest Department at Gopalakrishna High School, Bilinele village. He gave a presentation at the event, following which he flagged off a road rally. Officials of the Forest Department, dignitaries from the town and nearly 200 students attended the event. During the road rally, informative posters were distributed and citizens were urged to avoid kindling fires in the forest.

Bhuvan attended and spoke at two other such programmes. He visited Panja Government High School to interact with approximately 60 students and Village Forest Committee members, and visited Anejhari Butterfly Camp at Kollur to speak with 50 students and four teachers.

Though the pandemic has slowed down fieldwork and community outreach efforts, Bhuvan hosted his first successful webinar for students and staff members of K.S.S College, Kukke, on the topic "the role of man in natural disasters".

local nurseries in the region, Bhuvan observed that very few native species are grown and the nurseries mostly house exotic species.

In light of this, Bhuvan has been collecting native seed and has nurtured 675 saplings of 15 indigenous species in collaboration with the Kallaje and Yenekal local Forest Department nurseries. Saplings of species such as *Eugenia gardneri*, *Tetrameles nudiflora*, *Artocarpus heterophyllus*, *Artocarpus hirsutus*, *Hopea wightii*, *Myristica malabarica*, and *Scleropyrum pentandrum* are presently being nurtured under this project. In July, he invited local farmers to the nursery and distributed over 300 saplings to them to plant on their farmlands under *Aranya Krishi Protsaha Yojane*, a government scheme to encourage tree plantation by farmers.

As a result of regular meetings and negotiations, the Kukke Subramanya temple authorities have agreed to allow forest restoration in several patches of land around the town, totalling to about four acres. In June 2020, Bhuvan met the Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF) and requested him to plant only native species during plantation drives. The DCF agreed with Bhuvan's recommendation and instructed the Range Forest Officer to do the same.

### Tackling Forest Crimes

Bhuvan has been vigilant in addressing illegal forest activities in the Kukke, Subramanyam region. In February, he reported illegal fishing across Kotehole river in Kidu Reserve Forest region of Subramanya range. In June, based on a report from a local informant, he informed the Mangalore Forest Mobile Squad about the possible logging of a tree in Devarahalli village. The loggers were in possession of a permit to cut trees on their own land. However, they felled an *Artocarpus hirsutus* tree in the adjoining forest.

In July, Bhuvan informed the RFO of Panja about teak wood theft in the Arampadi plantation. Based on his information two culprits were detained, while two others absconded. A case has been booked, and has been admitted in taluk court. The RFO noted that the culprits were among the most wanted by the department.

In October, Bhuvan informed the Forest Mobile Squad, Puttur about the illegal felling of an *Artocarpus hirsutus* tree in the Pijakkala village of the Panja Reserve Forest. Three men were found at the scene, and a case has been booked. During another such incident in October, Bhuvan informed the RFO of Kukke about illegal logging



### Conservation 101

Since May 2020, the Sanctuary Nature Foundation has been organising weekly webinar lectures for our Mud on Boots Project Leaders. Each session includes an expert speaker who holds forth on their area of expertise for 40 minutes, and is followed by discussions with the group. In addition to these expert talks, our Project Leaders have also been presenting on their own work to the Sanctuary Nature Foundation team in an effort to improve their public speaking and communication skills. The lectures covered diverse topics related to conservation, and guest speakers included Praveen Bhargav, Managing Trustee of Wildlife First, scientist Umesh Srinivasan, conservation lawyer Mridula Raghavan, RTI activist Rohit Choudhury, conservation biologist, writer and policy expert Neha Sinha, wildlife forensics expert Samyukta Chemudupati, community conservation project manager Bhavna Menon, conservation researcher Trishant Simlai and conservation and wildlife educator Dr. Parvish Pandya.

in Uppukala Reserve Forest. A case was booked, and the wood beams were seized.

In November, Bhuvan helped Subramanya Forest Department staff apprehend a poacher in Moojur Reserve Forest. A case was booked under the Wild Life Protection Act and is ongoing in the Sullia taluk court.

Since January 2021, he has also been monitoring road-widening works in Kukke town to prevent unnecessary tree felling.

### Wildlife Rescue

Bhuvan is often approached by community members to rescue wildlife in the region. Each of these rescues are conducted with approval, assistance and guidance from the local Forest Department.

In June 2020, Bhuvan was part of a rescue operation to capture and release a baby mugger crocodile that was found in a freshly-dug trench along the Kumardhara river in Kukke. He worked with members of the Forest Department to safely release the reptile back into the river.

In July, Bhuvan rescued and released a checkered keelback snake that was trapped in a fishing net. During another such call, Bhuvan rescued and released a snake bird in Kulkunda village of the Kukke Range.

In the months of October and November, he relocated a cobra from a local village, and a python from a local farm. A sambar that was trapped in a snare was rescued and released in the Yenekal Reserve Forest after careful treatment and a day's recovery in the Yenekal forest nursery.





**Malhar Indulkar**



**LOCATION: SINDHUDURG DISTRICT  
STATE: MAHARASHTRA**

Born to a family of agricultural activists, and a graduate of Swaraj University, Malhar demonstrates innate leadership qualities. He is focused on the conservation of sacred groves and riverine habitats along the Tillari and Terekhol rivers in Maharashtra. Mentored by senior members of the Nityata River Otter Conservancy, Malhar uses a combination of advocacy, documentation and community outreach to achieve his conservation goals

**Internship with MNCC**

In March 2020, Malhar began an internship with the Malabar Nature Conservation Club (MNCC) that is active in and around Amboli and Chaukul.

During his internship, Malhar worked on maintaining a People's Biodiversity Register in Amboli village. The document includes 31 forms comprising questionnaires on natural resources, wildlife encounters, human-wildlife conflict, details of agricultural practices, forest produce and livelihood practices.

Malhar also went on daily patrols in the forests of Amboli with the MNCC team. Dozens of snares were found and discarded by the team during these patrols. Information about logging activities in the region was also reported to the local Forest Department.

**Surveys and Mapping**

Malhar's quest to document and protect the otters of Sindhudurg is ongoing. Over the past few months, he has welcomed several volunteers to help him with his surveys. Malhar is slowly forming a network of these volunteers, whom he calls "otter monitors", in the villages along the Terekhol river stretch.

Malhar resumed his field work in June 2020, once the lockdown was lifted. This field season, Malhar reported 21 individual otters during three separate surveys along stretches of the Tillari and Terekhol rivers. This effort is part of his long-term otter monitoring and estimation work in the region.

Malhar has also been making opportunistic records of roadkills with GPS locations in the region. In October 2020 alone, Malhar recorded 10 roadkills that included black pond turtles, ruddy mongoose, lizards and various species of snakes. This data is shared with Wildlife Conservation Trust's Roadkills app. Roadkills is a citizen science project that engages concerned citizens in collecting data on mortality of wild animals on roads, railway lines and irrigation canals across the country.

In 2020, Sanctuary collaborated with conservation enterprise Technology For Wildlife to produce professional maps of otter distribution in Sindhudurg based on Malhar's surveys. These maps will be an important addition to conservation advocacy efforts, and will provide baseline data of otter populations in the area.





### Writing Change

In 2020, Malhar picked up the pen to spread awareness about otters and conservation through local magazines and newspapers. Notably, Malhar penned an article on conservation challenges and importance of otters for the renowned Marathi magazine *Andhashraddha Nirmulan Samiti*.

Malhar has also started measuring and mapping the area of listed riparian sacred groves. Presently he is working to map sacred groves along Tillari, Terekhol and Ghataprabha rivers. These riparian groves are prime otter habitat. Malhar's work can be helpful in prioritising stretches for extended conservation efforts. He has thus far identified 11 sacred groves along the three rivers.

### Conservation Interventions

While conducting otter surveys along the Terekhol stretch, Malhar has identified potential conservation sites, recorded threats to these, and submitted a report with suggested interventions to the concerned Forest Department. Some of the sites recorded are:

**Baavlat maulichi kond** – an 800 m. long stretch of sacred forest along the Terekhol river, with Reserved Forest on the opposite bank. This beautiful stretch is home to a bevy of nine smooth-coated otters. While a part of this area is protected by the local community, gillnet fishing is a major concern in the unprotected parts.

**Akachi fatter** – A small site on the banks of the Dabhil river, it is vulnerable to electric fishing. This is particularly distressing as otter presence has also been noted here.

**Saat baay** – This is a cluster of seven river pools and a 955 m. stretch of forest along the Dabhil river. Fishing is taboo here as *Saat baay* is considered sacred by the local community. However, the site is still vulnerable to anthropogenic pressures from nearby rubber plantations that is causing siltation of the river pools.

Some of these sites are at risk of submersion from the proposed Dabhil dam, and are also vulnerable to pollution and unsustainable fishing practices such as bleach fishing.

Malhar shared his report on these areas with the District Forest Officer and other members of the Forest Department. A discussion on the matter was also held with community elders including the former Sarpanch of the area. A proposal to notify *Baavlat maulichi kond* as a Conservation Reserve was submitted to the Chief Wildlife Warden, along with recommendations for waste management and protection of the other sites.

In November 2020, Malhar conducted a workshop for local school students in Sherle-Banda village. Activities included presentations, camera-trapping, art, and discussions. Separately, students from Arosbaag village were taken birdwatching and on a night walk to familiarise them with indigenous flora and fauna.



Malhar and naturalist Pravin Satoskar aim to conduct nature camps for village youth along the vulnerable patches of Dabhil – Terekhol rivers over the next few months.

### Our Myristica Heritage

Following two years of sustained efforts, a rare Myristica swamp near the Bambarde hamlet was declared a Biological Heritage Site! Malhar has been instrumental in protecting and highlighting the ecological value of this swamp, known as *Kanhalachi Rai*.

Through the years, Malhar has collaborated with Forest Department officials, the Sindhudurg Wetland Committee, local community members, and nature enthusiasts to pave the way for this declaration.

Malhar's ongoing effort to germinate and grow Myristica saplings with the help of local farmers from Bambarde

is also paying dividends. Currently two farming families that have agricultural land adjoining *Kanhalachi Rai*, are monitoring and nurturing the saplings. In July 2020, Malhar and his associates were able to transplant 20 saplings of *Myristica fatua* and *Gymnacranthera canarica* to the Sonarli sacred grove, in the nearby region.

In 2020, Malhar facilitated a workshop to encourage organic farming amongst farmers with land adjoining the Myristica swamp. The workshop was led by Rajan Venkatesh in Babarwadi village and was attended by eight farmers. They were taught to make organic pesticide and fertiliser. Malhar shares that farmers who have already adopted such practices following previous workshops have reported increased and better quality yield. The processes shown by Venkatesh have been further taught to farmers in Hevale village by Malhar's associate Narayan kaka.





Shiv Kumar



#### A Published Author

Shiv is a co-author of the recently published paper '[Studies on the Mammalian Diversity of Lahaul valley, District Lahaul and Spiti, Himachal Pradesh, India with their Conservation status](#)', for which studies were conducted between 2010 and 2019!

#### LOCATION: LAHAUL AND SPITI DISTRICT STATE: HIMACHAL PRADESH

For the past five years, Shiv has been carrying out camera trapping exercises in three locations to document the biodiversity of the region and collect data on snow leopard presence, behaviour and movement. Shiv recorded two individual snow leopards on his camera traps in the Miyar valley this year. He has recorded one of these male snow leopards for four consecutive years! Apart from rare sightings and exciting images of snow leopards, Shiv documented the first sighting of a Himalayan goral in Udaipur Forest Range, seven Himalayan brown bears, and three Tibetan wolves in Lahaul.

Shiv's records have provided interesting insight into the lives of the region's wild animals. For example, he documented a sub-adult snow leopard marking territory in an area where he previously documented the death of an older snow leopard. This documentation indicates territory occupation by the young one. In November 2020, Shiv documented a female brown bear and her cub in the snow in Pattan valley. This proved to be an unusual sighting as brown bears are expected to hibernate at this time of the year, and could hint at climate vagrancies.

With fresh sightings of six potentially unrecorded bird species in the district, Shiv has now documented 170 birds on the ebird India portal. He spotted a Yellowhammer bird during the 2020 Great Backyard Bird Count, as well as the Red-throated Thrush, Mongolian Finch, Spotted Flycatcher, Rufous-bellied Niltava, and the Brambling. Shiv's documentation of Lahaul's biodiversity is important because though this forest division does not include a single protected area it is home to innumerable rare Himalayan wildlife.

#### Observation and Documentation

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### An Award-winning Photographer

This year Shiv won various awards for his brilliant wildlife photography. This includes first place in the Himachal Pradesh Wildlife Week photography competition, second place at the Wildlife Week Online Photography competition 2020, and a special mention at the Sanctuary Wildlife Photography Awards 2020!

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### Surveying Shepherds

Having witnessed the toll taken by wild animals on the livestock of migratory shepherds over the past few years, Shiv decided to scientifically survey the situation by documenting grazing routes and challenges faced by the migrant shepherds in Lahaul. Shiv designed the survey questionnaire with help from Ajay Bijoor and Munib Khanyari of the Nature Conservation Foundation's High Altitudes programme. In the months of June and July, with assistance from the local Forest Department, Shiv interacted with more than 100 shepherds, and interviewed over 40 shepherds along five different walking routes. He completed 28 surveys in this time period.

Every summer, migratory shepherds travelling from Chamba and Kangra districts of Himachal Pradesh arrive in Lahaul to graze their livestock. The interviewed shepherds reported heavy livestock depredation to Shiv. They told him that they believe that if they follow traditional rituals, this damage can be eliminated or reduced. One shepherd reported the loss of 23 sheep in a span of two months; while others mentioned encounters with snow leopards, wolves and bears. Shiv left two camera traps in the custody of the shepherds after



teaching them how to use these. Various other causes such as disease and lack of medical help for injured animals were also reported. The data collected will be analysed with help from Ajay and Munib.

In October 2020, Shiv took the concerns of the shepherds to the Chief Conservator of Forests, and put forth a proposal to build shelters along their migratory route at places vulnerable to attack from wild predators.

### Frontline Training

In 2020, Shiv assisted a number of wildlife organisations and projects, such as WWF-India, Nature Conservation Foundation India, Wildlife Institute of India, and UNDP Secure Himalaya Project. In the first week of November, he also attended a two-day training camp for the frontline staff of the Secure Himalaya Project Landscape on human-wildlife conflict mitigation and monitoring in Lahaul. The training was arranged by senior scientists Dr. Sathyakumar, Dr. Adhikari, and Salvador Lyngdoh from the Wildlife Institute of India. Here Shiv received hands-on training in the use of camera traps, GPS and satellite radio collars. In October, Shiv was a part of the team that was chosen to accompany the Prime Minister of India, during his week-long visit to Himachal Pradesh. In the second week of November, Shiv met renowned scientist and recipient of the Sanctuary Wildlife Service Award 2015, Dr. Yash Veer Bhatnagar at Keylong. Together they made a visit to the conflict prone village of Ghoshal and discussed issues related to human-brown bear conflict with the local community. Shiv is looking at a long-term association with Dr. Bhatnagar to work towards mitigation of human-wildlife conflict in Lahaul.

### Conflict Mitigation

In September and October 2020, Shiv took up the mission to minimise negative human-wildlife encounters in Lahaul by using camera traps to record and identify large mammal movement in the village farmlands. In September, locals from a village in the Tindi Range of Lahaul reported a crop raid by black bears. After three weeks of investigation using camera traps, Shiv not only recorded amazing footage of a mother bear and her two cubs entering maize fields at night, but also informed the community of their path and time of entry. The footage also helped locals recognise that recent crop depredation was done by a troupe of 40 monkeys and not by the bears. Sanctuary believes that such information-sharing helps reduce resentment towards bears amongst the farmers.





# Sunil Harsana



**LOCATION: FARIDABAD DISTRICT  
STATE: HARYANA**

Well-known amongst Delhi's nature lovers, Sunil Harsana is synonymous with Mangar Bani, a sacred forest that lies on the outskirts of the capital city. A resident of Mangar village, Sunil is dedicated in his resolve to document and protect this remnant wilderness of the Aravali hills. Sunil leads the Mangar Eco Club for local children, keeps track of encroachments and illegal activities within the forest, documents biodiversity, and tackles issues of soil erosion and forest degradation. Sunil's work is advised by environmental analyst Chetan Agarwal and a number of associated wildlife researchers.

### Conservation and Restoration

The Covid-19 pandemic brought many of the activities of Sunil's Mangar Eco Club to a halt during the lockdown. However, once the lockdown was lifted, the members of the club divided themselves into smaller groups to continue their work under Sunil's guidance.

Before the onset of the 2020 monsoon, club members built seven check dams to halt soil erosion in Mangar Bani. Heavy rains damaged a few of the old and new check dams, and so repairs were conducted in September, and patches of forest that are vulnerable to erosion were identified.

During their regular forest walks, the Eco Club noticed the loss of certain native tree species because of heavy rains. They listed the affected species and reported the loss to the Forest Department that subsequently committed to building check dams on a large scale in 2021.

In 2020, Sunil led five cleanliness drives in and around Mangar Bani. Three were conducted within the forest, one in Mangar village, and one along the Gurugram-Faridabad highway. Citizens from both Mangar and the neighbouring cities of Delhi, Gurugram and Faridabad participated in these drives.

Despite the pandemic, Sunil's annual native seeds collection and planting activities progressed unhindered. Over 700 saplings of native tree species were planted in degraded parts of the forest and the nearby crematorium

### The Artist's Way

Volunteer artist Labonie Roy has written and designed a beautiful guide to the native trees of Mangar Bani for the children of the Mangar Eco Club. The guide not only illustrates the morphology of trees, but also includes experiments and activities. Labonie is a Project Assistant, Education and Public Engagement, with the Nature Conservation Foundation India.





### Mangar Computer Centre

In October 2020, the Mangar Eco Club inaugurated a small computer training centre with support from donor Iskander Laljee. The centre provides free computer training to community youth, and will be run by Laksh Foundation. Currently, 25 students have registered for training.

grounds. The plantation drives this year saw the participation of a number of Mangar village elders, which is an encouraging sign from the community.

### Outreach

On March 8, 2020, Sunil organised a nature walk with a group of doctors from Max Hospital, Gurugram. Fifteen doctors participated in the walk, along with their families. The primary objective of the walk was to introduce the group to the conservation value of Mangar Bani while also exploring its biodiversity. Sunil also led a discussion about the role of forests such as Mangar Bani in keeping local communities healthy. Bi-weekly walks with citizens from Gurugram, Faridabad and Haryana were arranged regularly by the Mangar Eco Club once the lockdown was lifted.

### Activism and Advocacy

The contentious status of Haryana's Mangar Bani forest has left it vulnerable to encroachment. In December 2019, Sunil recorded illegal construction underway inside a fenced section of the forest. The activity was immediately reported to the Forest Department. Subsequently, during an awareness rally in January 2020, Sunil along with 15 citizen volunteers and members of the media demarcated 47 sites being encroached upon or degraded within Mangar Bani. The pressure that built from this initiative compelled the District Administration to take action on the complaints. However this has been unsatisfactory in addressing the issue of land grab in Mangar. Sunil and members of the Aravali Bachao campaign are determined to keep building public support and mounting pressure on government authorities to protect the fast-degrading Aravali forests of the National Capital Region.



### Learning GIS

In September 2020, Sunil was selected to attend a "training programme in application of Remote Sensing, GIS and GPS in Forest Resource Assessment" hosted by the GIS Centre for Forest Research Institute (FRI), Dehradun, a flagship research institute MoEF, Government of India under the aegis of ICFRE.

### Biodiversity Documentation

With social distancing protocols in mind, Sunil continued his bi-monthly bird walks with select members of the eco Eco Club and community. The list of species sighted at Mangar has grown steadily over the months. Sunil and the team recorded 66 species of birds in February 2019, and 115 in December 2020!

Eight species previously unrecorded in Mangar -- the Brown Hawk-Owl, Black-naped Monarch, Jungle Nightjar, Long-tailed Nightjar, Eurasian Wryneck, Red Avadavat, Eurasian Roller and White-eyed Buzzard -- were found.



# In The News



## अरावली में कितने हैं तेंदुए और अन्य वन्य जीव, होगी गिनती

### हरियाणा फॉरेस्ट एंड वाइल्ड लाइफ डिपार्टमेंट करेगा प्रदेश के अलग-अलग वन्य क्षेत्रों में सर्वे

हरियाणा के अलग-अलग वन्य क्षेत्रों में तेंदुए और अन्य वन्य जीवों की गिनती के लिए एक सर्वेक्षण शुरू है। हरियाणा फॉरेस्ट एंड वाइल्ड लाइफ डिपार्टमेंट द्वारा शुरू की गई यह सर्वेक्षण हरियाणा के अलग-अलग वन्य क्षेत्रों में तेंदुए और अन्य वन्य जीवों की गिनती के लिए है।

**अरावली में महत्वपूर्ण इतिहासिक वन्य क्षेत्रों में सर्वेक्षण**

**2017 के सर्वेक्षण अनुसार अरावली में 31 तेंदुए होने की जानकारी मिली थी**

**गिरनारी संरक्षित अभयारण्य में 80 से 90 के करीब तेंदुए की संख्या है**

प्रकार	2017	2012
तेंदुआ	31	8
बैंगल	166	129
सकलस्य	125	17
जंगली भालु	26	46
जंगली भालु	61	---
बाघ	4	2
भैंस	3	---

हरियाणा के अलग-अलग वन्य क्षेत्रों में तेंदुए और अन्य वन्य जीवों की गिनती के लिए एक सर्वेक्षण शुरू है। हरियाणा फॉरेस्ट एंड वाइल्ड लाइफ डिपार्टमेंट द्वारा शुरू की गई यह सर्वेक्षण हरियाणा के अलग-अलग वन्य क्षेत्रों में तेंदुए और अन्य वन्य जीवों की गिनती के लिए है।

## मांगर बनी की सुंदरता पर मोहित श्रीलंका की नवरंग चिड़िया

हरद्वार नागर • फरीदाबाद

अपनी सुंदरता से हर किसी को मोहित करने वाला दक्षिण भारत व श्रीलंका का मूल निवासी पक्षी इंडियन पिट्टा मांगर बनी की सुंदरता पर मोहित हो गया है। ये हर साल करीब दो हजार किलोमीटर का सफर तय कर यहां पहुंचते हैं। इस बार इस चिड़िया के छह जोड़ों की साइटिंग (दिखाई देना) मांगर बनी में हो रही है। अपने नौ रंगों के कारण यह पक्षी नवरंग चिड़िया के नाम से मशहूर है। यह बेहद खूबसूरत है। इसे अक्सर घने पेड़ों की टहनियों में छिप कर रहना पसंद है।

अरावली में जंगल, जीवों और पक्षियों पर शोध करने वाले सुनील हरसाना के अनुसार, दक्षिण भारत व श्रीलंका के वन क्षेत्र नवरंग चिड़िया के मूल निवास स्थान हैं। अपना वंश बढ़ाने के लिए मई-जून में ये पक्षी हिमालय, जम्मू-कश्मीर, सिक्किम, नेपाल व पश्चिमी पाकिस्तान के वन क्षेत्र में पहुंचते हैं। अक्टूबर तक इनके बच्चे बड़े होकर उड़ने लायक हो जाते हैं तो ये वापस मूल निवास लौट आते हैं। पिछले पांच-छह साल से मांगर बनी में भी इन पक्षियों की साइटिंग हो रही है। अन्य जगहों की तरह यहां भी ये मई-जून में पहुंचते हैं और अक्टूबर में बच्चों को लेकर वापस लौटते हैं। सुनील का कहना है कि इन पक्षियों के मांगर बनी पहुंचने पर कोई शोध तो नहीं हुआ, मगर यह

तय है कि इन्हें यहां का माहौल नेस्टिंग (घोंसला बनाकर अंडे देने व बच्चे बड़े करने की प्रक्रिया) के अनुकूल लगा, इसलिए अब इन्होंने नियमित रूप से यहां पहुंचना शुरू कर दिया है। मांगर बनी के अलावा पिछले तीन साल से भोंडसी (गुरुग्राम) में भी दिखाई दे रहे हैं।

सुनील के अनुसार, उत्तर भारत में केवल इन्हीं दो जगहों पर इन पक्षियों की साइटिंग होती है। नवरंग चिड़िया को देखना व अपने कैमरे में कैद करना पक्षी प्रेमियों के रोमांचक क्षण होता है। आसपास के इलाके से बड़ी संख्या में पक्षी प्रेमी नवरंग चिड़िया को देखने मांगर बनी पहुंच रहे हैं।

दो हजार किमी का सफर तय कर मांगर बनी पहुंचे नवरंग चिड़िया के छह जोड़े, नेस्टिंग के बाद लौटेंगे वापस

मांगर बनी में पिछले दिनों एक पेड़ की डाल पर बैठी दिखाई दी नवरंग चिड़िया • फोटो सौजन्य : सुनील हरसाना

If protected, Aravallis can support rich biodiversity: Study.

'Leopards, hyenas and more in Gurugram Aravalis'.

More wildlife in Aravallis at Faridabad, Gurgaon than at Asola, need better protection: Study.

High diversity of birds, many rarely seen in Delhi, in Mangar area: Study.

Study identifies Mangar forests as crucial bird habitat, calls for increased research and conservation.

अरावली में पक्षियों की 219 प्रजाति मौजूद

Meet the man conserving otters in Maharashtra's Western Ghats.

Maha's only swamp gets biodiversity heritage site tag.

New Protected Area for myristica in Sindhudurg.

Endangered snow leopardess with two cubs spotted in Miyar valley.

Chasing the Grey Ghost : A Man in the Wild.

Poachers kill deer in Jaisalmer district.



## Acknowledgements

The Mud on Boots Project promotes collaborations and partnerships at every step. Conservation is an impossible dream without these. We are thus privileged to receive guidance and support from a number of stellar professionals and organisations.

Thank you Pankaj Singh and the Faraway Originals team; Shashank Srinivasan and Nandini Mehrotra from Technology for Wildlife; Gerry Martin and Chandini Chhabra of The Gerry Martin Project; Purna Singh Bindra; Dr. Naveen Pandey and Kedar Gore of The Corbett Foundation; Sachin Sridhara and Meghna Krishnadas; Gopa Kumar Menon of The River Otter Conservancy; Ajay Bijoor and Munib Khanyari from Nature Conservation Foundation – India; Chetan Agarwal; Shashank Dalvi; Peeyush Sekhsaria; Mallika Chandra; Nandini Velho; and Sahil Nijhawan.

We are also grateful to the many members of the Indian Forest Service who have supported our work. A special thanks to Himachal Pradesh Forest Department, Karnataka Forest Department, Maharashtra Forest Department, and Haryana Forest Department for their cooperation.

Undoubtedly, no work would be possible without our wonderful team at Sanctuary, which provides backend support in uncountable and invaluable ways each month.

We cannot close this report, without once again acknowledging the work of our Project Leaders and all grassroots conservationists across India. It is their drive and conviction that gives purpose to the Mud on Boots Project.







## Our Supporters

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## Mud on Boots Project Leaders 2021



### PHUNTSOG DOLMA

**Location:** Nimmo village, Leh District, Ladakh  
**Occupation:** Flock Supervisor, District Sheep Husbandry Department  
**Nominated by:** Munib Khanyari, Nature Conservation Foundation – India

A young woman working with the sheep husbandry department in Ladakh, Phuntsog ensures that livestock health is maintained across the Rong region. Her work secures peoples livelihoods and prevents diseases from spilling over to the unique wildlife of the area. Phuntsog has a personal interest in the plant diversity of this landscape and in exploring the uses and conservation of various floral species. She is the co-author of a soon to be published book titled *The Plants of Ladakh – A Photographic Guide*.

Plant research and conservation in Ladakh has seen a severe paucity. Phuntsog isn't only building a knowledge baseline for plants, but also working with local stakeholders to understand pasture richness and pressure on pastures so as to ensure that humans and wildlife can co-exist. This is critical as most of Ladakh is a pastoral society. Through her efforts, Phuntsog is bridging the knowledge gap and the communication gap, as her book has information in Ladakhi and English.

With support from Sanctuary and guidance from Munib Khanyari of the Nature Conservation Foundation -- India, Phuntsog will be able to expand her work to include further surveys and studies on plant diversity and threats to pasture lands; understand the link between livestock grazing, wild herbivore grazing and plant diversity; conduct awareness programmes on the importance of native plants for local residents and nomads; and eventually create a database of high-altitude plants found in the area.

## Mud on Boots Project Leaders 2021



### DECHIN PEMA SAINGMO AND PEMBA ROMO

**Location:** Mago-chu valley, West Kameng and Tawang Districts, Arunachal Pradesh  
**Occupation:** Project Assistants, WWF-India  
**Nominated by:** Janaki M., WWF-India

Dechin and Pemba have been working as Project Assistants under the guidance of Janaki M., a Project Officer of WWF-India's Western Arunachal Landscape. Over the past three years, they have been actively involved in camera trapping across various study sites as well as engaging in community outreach. Both research assistants are also alumni of the Green Hub, a video-documentation centre in Tezpur, Assam.



The duo seeks to engage with local communities in eight villages in the Mago-chu valley to understand and document their perception of conservation, traditional practices and institutions that are rooted in natural resource management. They will also be actively involved in discussion with the community about the threats and challenges they face, in a natural resource context, as well as discuss possible solutions to these issues. This will greatly contribute to tailoring conservation action and building strong relationships with the communities. Alongside this intensive community outreach work, both Dechin and Pemba intend to use their photo and video documentation skills to record the flora and fauna of the valley.

Support from Sanctuary will allow Dechin and Pemba to raise their profiles, deepen their work, grow their network, and be recognised as active stewards of community-based conservation in India.



## Mud on Boots Project Leaders 2021



### AMIR KUMAR CHHETRI

**Location:** Panijhora village, Jalpaiguri district, West Bengal.

**Occupation:** Research Assistant and safari guide

**Nominated by:** Priyanka Das, The Coexistence Project

Born and brought up in a remote forest village, Amir Chhetri's indigenous knowledge and skills are admired by his colleagues at The Coexistence Project. From a young age, Amir has worked with the Forest Department on fire management and anti-poaching drives, and as a safari guide for visiting tourists. Over the years, he has also worked with a range of researchers from reputed organisations and has developed skills in camera trapping, mist netting and conducting interviews.

Amir currently works as a Project Assistant with The Coexistence Project, which aims to foster safer shared spaces between people and wildlife using science-based conservation interventions in West Bengal. With support from Sanctuary, Amir seeks to mitigate conflict between humans and wild elephants in the small forest village of Panijhora, which lies adjacent to the Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary and the territorial forests of Jalpaiguri Forest Division. Its residents practice sustenance farming but face heavy crop depredation from elephants and other wild animals. They currently use loud noises and bright lights to try and deter wildlife from entering their fields. The community is exceedingly tolerant of wild animals, and the village has not reported a single human or animal casualty despite the conflict. With the grant from Sanctuary, Amir aims to build a fence around the crop fields of his village, which will be owned and maintained by the village community. This will serve as a pilot project to explore the efficacy of community-owned fences in conflict areas, and can be implemented at a larger scale by incorporating the lessons learnt.

## Mud on Boots Project Leaders 2021



### VISHAL AHUJA

**Location :** Chamba valley, Chamba district, Himachal Pradesh.

**Occupation:** Project Assistant, Wildlife Information Liaison Development Society.

**Nominated by :** Payal B. Molur, Wildlife Educator

A resident of Chamba valley, Vishal was hired by the Himalayan Grey Langur Project when it received the Conservation Leadership Award in 2012. He continues to work with this programme and receives limited support from Wildlife Information Liaison Development Society. He is an excellent field worker and for the past eight years has been documenting the wild dietary preferences of the Himalayan grey langur, rhesus macaque and Himalayan black bear in the fragmented natural landscape around Khajjiar-Kalatop Wildlife Sanctuary. He has observed that the lack of adequate habitat and natural food plants for these species has resulted in increased human-wildlife interactions such as crop-raiding of agricultural fields and accidental attacks by bears.

With support from Sanctuary, Vishal seeks to initiate a long-term habitat restoration project that will include setting up a native plant nursery, collecting and germinating wild native seeds and plants, and rewilding abandoned terraced farmlands with the consent and support of the landowners. Vishal is recognised as a dedicated, passionate and diligent grassroots conservationist, who is also a wonderful community liaison. He believes that his habitat restoration project will ultimately provide food and habitat to wild species, while reducing crop depredation. Vishal's work will be based on the scientific baseline data that he helped collect, and will be guided by Dr. Sanjay Molur, Executive Director, Zoo Outreach Organisation.



## Mud on Boots Project Leaders 2021



### RADHESHYAM PEMANI BISHNOI

**Location:** Pokhran, Jaisalmer district.

**Occupation:** Volunteer, ERDS Foundation.

**Nominated by:** Dr. Sumit Dookia, ERDS Foundation

Twenty-year-old Radheshyam Bishnoi is a local volunteer with Dr. Sumit Dookia's Ecology, Rural Development and Sustainability Foundation (ERDS) that focuses on community conservation of the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard (GIB) in Rajasthan. Radheshyam belongs to the Bishnoi community, which is famous for its reverence for nature.

The Pokhran area of Jaisalmer is home to around 30 GIBs, which may escape the purview of the Forest Department when occupying spaces outside designated Protected Areas Radheshyam monitors the GIBs in this landscape, conducts anti-poaching operations, and helps with wildlife rescues. Most importantly, he coordinates a network of village volunteers with the aim to develop a GIB-friendly community. Radheshyam has been instrumental to conservation efforts in the area, recently providing information that led to the arrest of a poaching gang in April. He has also consistently highlighted the threat to GIBs from overhead high-tension power lines, recently discovering and reporting four dead GIBs under such wires to the Forest Department

Radheshyam wishes to pursue conservation fulltime. Over the past three years he has evolved from an animal welfare worker concerned with chinkara rescue to a grassroots wildlife conservationist who takes a landscape level approach. With Sanctuary's support he will continue to grow the GIB Community Conservation Project in the Thar Desert under the mentorship of Dr. Dookia.

## Photo credits

- |          |                                      |        |                          |
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| Pg 1.    | Shiv Kumar, Lahaul Forest Department | Pg 17. | Courtesy - Shiv Kumar    |
| Pg 2, 3. | Shashank Dalvi                       | Pg 18. | Courtesy - Shiv Kumar    |
| Pg 5.    | Shashank Dalvi                       | Pg 19. | Shiv Kumar               |
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| Pg 9.    | Courtesy - Bhuvaneshwar H.C          | Pg 21. | Vijay Dhasmana           |
| Pg 10.   | Sachin Sridhara                      | Pg 22. | Chetan Agarwal           |
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| Pg 14.   | Courtesy - Malhar Indulkar           | Pg 28. | Shivaram Subramaniam     |
| Pg 15.   | Malhar Indulkar                      | Pg 36. | Shiv Kumar               |
| Pg 16.   | Shiv Kumar, Lahaul Forest Department |        |                          |





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*Note: Donations are eligible for a tax deduction under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act.*

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