



WWF

KERALA

2025

March-April 2025

Mruthika

Conservation Highlights of WWF-India, Kerala State Office

FROM THE STATE DIRECTOR'S DESK

How many Keralites have a serious concern about this newspaper report titled “State’s peak electricity demand may cross 7000 MW by 2026-27??? A very few. Others think that, in spite of all such reports, KSEB will find the needed electricity from somewhere or the other, and maybe there will be a hike in electricity charges - but that is OK since we are able to afford it. This peak in electricity demand is because of the hard-hitting manifestation of global warming and climate change, with an increase in temperature, the unbearable heat, and the subsequent increase in the use of air-conditioners. Adding to this is the adoption of more EVs that are charged from the grid, and also the increasing use of induction cook stoves at homes because of the unavailability and rising price of LPG cylinders. KSEB is looking to Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and Pumped Storage Projects (PSP) to meet this peak

demand. But that also needs a huge investment, which will come back to bite the consumer. Kerala’s total generation stands at 6669 MW as of March 2024. Out of this, the share of renewable, mainly rooftop solar, is just 20% i.e., 1365 MW. This is where a great opportunity lies. KSEB should keep aside other agendas and push for more uptake of Solar Rooftop in the State through the PM Surya Ghar Scheme of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Govt. of India. Across the country, the Central Government has set aside a huge budget towards this as part of the PM’s declaration to make India Carbon Neutral by 2070, and the target achieved so far is very less. Let us, as Kerala, take the leap in becoming the forerunner in this, which will, to a great extent, find a solution to our energy crisis and resolve related environmental, ecological, and economic challenges too.

Renjan Mathew Varghese
State Director

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN NATURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Global

Historic COP16 deal secures \$200bn annually for the global biodiversity protection

In a significant achievement for multilateralism amid a fraught geopolitical landscape and following a previous failed round of talks in Colombia, nations reached a consensus on several texts in Rome, including a landmark first-time agreement on a “permanent arrangement” to provide biodiversity finance to developing nations, thereby “future-proofing” the flow of funds beyond 2030; this financial pact was secured despite challenges such as the largest donor, the US (which is not a formal party to the talks), freezing most of its nature funding under Donald Trump, and numerous European signatories also recently cutting their aid budgets. Furthermore, countries agreed on two texts for tracking progress toward the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)—the

landmark 2022 deal to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030—a success for which COP16 president Susana Muhamad received a lengthy standing ovation for her role in guiding the pre-dawn consensus. However, celebrations were tempered by caution from some countries that a vast amount of progress is still needed to meet the 2030 goal, underscored by the fact that three-quarters of nations have yet to submit their UN biodiversity plans four months after the deadline, and a recent investigation revealed that more than half of the submitted plans do not commit to the GBF’s flagship target of protecting 30% of land and seas by 2030. (Source: Carbon Brief, 7 March 2025)

Global breakthrough to tackle shipping emissions

After a decade of talks, countries have agreed the first-ever international rules to reduce emissions from shipping – a sector responsible for 3% of global emissions. From 2028, large ships must switch to cleaner fuels or face penalties, marking a major step towards climate accountability in global trade. Shipping accounts for around 3% of global emissions. But unlike many other sectors it has struggled to reduce its carbon footprint over the last decade and is reliant on fossil fuels like diesel. But the agreement means it is now the first industry in the world with internationally

mandated targets to reduce emissions. The agreement was passed at the UN's International Maritime Organisation (IMO) meeting. (Source: BBC, 11 April 2025)

National

India surpasses China in number of Ramsar sites

India now has 89 Ramsar sites, surpassing China, which has 82. Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, Dr. Musonda Mumba, said that India has more Ramsar sites compared to China. Dr. Mumba, participating in the Sinhasi Social Impact Conference 2 - Wetland Conservation and Climate Change, said India now has 89 Ramsar sites surpassing China which has 82 sites. Speaking on the importance of wetlands, she said that they have tremendous value almost all of the world's fresh water is drawn from them. "Wetlands are the world's largest carbon shore, they purify and filter harmful water, our food supply depends on wetlands, extreme climatic events are mitigated by wetlands, wetlands provide jobs and sustainable livelihoods, almost half of all animal species live and breed in wetlands. The challenge for wetlands is that they have been used historically as waste lands; as a result of this, they are being lost at an alarming rate. Around 87% of wetlands have been lost since 1700 AD. Around 35% of wetlands have been lost since 1970. She also pointed out that wetlands are being lost at a rate of three times faster than tropical forests. "Around 4,875 wetland-dependent species are threatened with extinction globally. Over 80% of wastewater is released into wetlands immediate action is required to stop this." (Source: The Hindu, 21 April 2025)

India's first-ever seed germination database coming up

This initiative of the Ecological Restoration Alliance-India, offering more than 1,000 germination techniques, intends to help restoration practitioners, nursery managers, and native plant enthusiasts be more successful with their greening endeavours. An informal network of individuals and organisations working together to foster the knowledge and practice of ecological restoration of natural ecosystems in India is released a first-of-its-kind seed germination database on April 16, 2025. This free-access database, an initiative of the Ecological Restoration Alliance-India (ERA-I), offers more than 1,000 germination techniques for 465 native plant species. It intends to "make it easier for restoration practitioners, nursery managers, and native plant enthusiasts" to be more successful with growing native plants in nurseries. "One of the fundamental and most practical steps in the process for ecological restoration is to create a native plant nursery, which requires the knowledge base of germination protocols. This database is the first step toward that goal," conservationist Paul Blanchflower, director, Auroville Botanical Gardens, said. Auroville Botanical Gardens is one of nine institutional partners of

ERA-I. The others include the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, the Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF), and the Wildlife Trust of India. (Source: The Hindu, 16 April 2025)

State

No climate solution without climate education, says young activist Licypriya Kangujam of Manipur

Licypriya Kangujam, a thirteen-year-old from Manipur, winner of several awards and recognitions for her inspiring interventions, was in Kochi to attend the first student conference organized by Indian Green Building Council at Cochin University of Science and Technology campus, said that there is no climate solution without climate education. A vociferous supporter of concerted action for a sustainable future, she said there should be mandatory education on climate change and resilience. She said her call for climate education has received positive responses from Indian State Governments, with Gujarat and Rajasthan launching school programs. Addressing doubts about her young age, she emphasized that age doesn't hinder change, citing the devastating cyclones in Odisha in 2018 and 2019 as her motivation to fight for climate action and justice. She also urged for a national climate change law to curb emissions and promote responsible climate behaviour in society. (Source: The Hindu, 15 March 2025)

Kerala's climate change panel initiates study on unusual weather events, moots intensive campaign

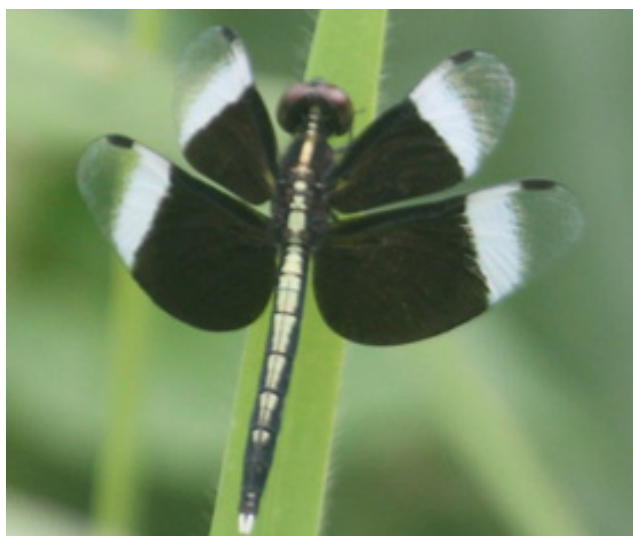
Kerala has faced severe climate impacts in recent months, including extreme rainfall, floods, and landslides, driven by global warming and local environmental degradation. Experts warn that rising sea levels, erratic monsoons, and deforestation are exacerbating vulnerabilities, urging sustainable solutions like eco-restoration, resilient infrastructure, and community-based adaptation programs to mitigate future risks. (Source: Online Manorama, 29 April 2025)

Report filed by the Forest and Wildlife Department, Kerala on forest conservation and management

The Kerala Forest and Wildlife Department's report (28/03/2025) to the NGT details measures to phase out exotic plantations (eucalyptus, acacia, wattle) since 2019 under its Eco-Restoration Policy (2021), aiming to restore native forests over two decades. Regarding the 2024 Wayanad landslides that killed 54, the report attributes the disaster to fragile terrain, soil piping, and extreme rainfall—not solely encroachments—while noting 7,620 ha of remaining exotic plantations. The department has halted all exotic planting since 1992-2019, shifting focus to indigenous species for ecological resilience. (Source: Kerala Forest Department, 28 March 2025)

SPECIES OF THE ISSUE

Pied Paddy Skimmer (*Neurothemis tullia*)



Occurs in large colonies in swamps and heavily-weeded tanks in different parts of India. It exhibits striking sexual dimorphism in colour and wing spot patterns. The male is dark with a large blue-black spot on the wing base while the female is dull olivaceous and the wing base is amber yellow. It breeds in marshes, well vegetated ponds, lakes and rice fields. It perches very close to ground and its flight is very weak.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Pick the odd one out based on its habitat:

1. Sloth, Macaw, Camel, Gorilla
2. Fox, Scorpion, Lion, Penguin
3. Dolphin, Coral, Giraffe, Octopus
4. Polar Bear, Toucan, Arctic Fox, Walrus
5. Salmon, Zebra, Lion, Wildebeest
6. Water Lilly, Coyote, Crocodile, Heron,
7. Mountain Goat, Snow Leopard, Yaks, Manatees
8. Pigeon, Panda, Rat, Squirrel
9. Ostrich, Piranha, African Elephant, Rhinoceros
10. Tapir, Arctic Tern, Poison Dart Frog, Boa Constrictor
11. Sea Turtle, Frigatebird, Anaconda, Coconut Crab
12. Pike (Fish), Meerkat, Beaver, Otter

Ans: 1. Camel; 2. Penguin; 3. Giraffe; 4. Toucan; 5. Salmon; 6. Coyote; 7. Manatee; 8. Panda; 9. Piranha; 10. Arctic tern; 11. Anaconda; 12. Meerkat

ACTIVITIES OF WWF-INDIA KERALA STATE OFFICE

Environment Education

Wild Wisdom Global Challenge - As part of the WWGC 2024 initiative, KLSO, in association with the Kerala Forests Department, conducted two awareness sessions on "Demystifying Snakes" to educate students about snake conservation and safety. The first session was held on 13 March at Bharatiya Vidyabhavan, Kannur, where Mr. Bijilesh, a Sarpa Volunteer and Snake Rescuer from the Kerala Forests Department, led an engaging and interactive session for 90 students.



The second session took place on 4 April at PM Shri Kendriya Vidyalaya, CRPF, Pallippuram, where Mr. Biju, also a Sarpa Volunteer from the Kerala Forests Department, conducted the session. The students actively participated in the session.



People 4 Planet

Magical Mangroves

During March 2025, the WWF team, along with volunteer Preethi T., conducted a series of "Magical Mangroves" educational sessions across Kerala. The series began on March 6 with an event at National College, Thiruvananthapuram, inaugurated by the principal, followed by sessions at KUCTE Anchal and Sabarigiri College of Education. Events continued on March 11th at NICDS, Thiruvananthapuram and at FMNC, Kollam as part of its Zoology Department Day, followed by a session at St. Gregorios College, Kottarakkara.



on March 14th, and concluded on March 15th at St. Thomas College, Kozhancherry. All events, which engaged dozens of students at each location, featured an overview of mangroves, a documentary screening, and an interactive quiz.

Mangrove Trail at Kavanad, Kollam



The Mangrove Trail at Kavanad, Kollam, part of “Magical Mangroves - Phase 5,” aimed to raise awareness about mangrove ecosystems and conservation. Participants had gathered and travelled by boat to Cascade Island Restaurant on Ashtamudi Lake. A session was by Renjan Mathew Varghese, State Director (Kerala), WWF-India and Mr. Madhusoodanan V.K., a local mangrove expert who highlighted key mangrove species, including the rare *Ceriops tagal*. After exploring the trail, participants shared observations in nature journals, with top contributors receiving tokens of appreciation. Dr. Sarlin reflected on the program’s impact, and Mr. Madhusoodanan stressed involving youth in mangrove preservation. The event had 32 participants.



The “Magical Mangroves – Phase V” closing ceremony was held online on 27 March, where Project Officer of KLSO, Anushreedha, presented the Kerala update. State-level winners—Preeti T., Raphy Neelamkavil, and Manoj I.B.—were announced.

World Wildlife Day 2025

Campaign at Thiruvananthapuram Museum and Zoo Premises



As part of World Wildlife Day 2025, KLSO in collaboration with the Directorate of Museums & Zoos, organized interactive wildlife-themed games at Thiruvananthapuram Museum & Zoo on 4 March. Activities included identifying state animals and birds, wildlife sanctuaries, clay modelling, drawing, and painting. Four volunteers and KLSO staff engaged around 1,000 participants of all ages.

Invited talk at Govt Arts College, Thiruvananthapuram

The State Director, also an alumnus of Govt Arts College, gave a talk on “Biodiversity Conservation – the Citizen



Science Approach” to about 60 students and faculty from Zoology and Botany Departments, during the college’s World Wildlife Day observance on March 4th.



World Sparrow Day 2025



KLSO produced a short documentary titled “Kunjikkiliye... Koodevide?” on House Sparrow conservation near Thiruvananthapuram, released on World Sparrow Day 2025 (March 20). Intern Anupama R. scripted, directed, and narrated it, with guidance from Renjan Mathew Varghese, State Director and A K Sivakumar, Senior Education Officer. Volunteers Reji Chandran (cameraman) and Mathews K. George (editor) contributed. The film was premiered during Earth Hour.

Earth Hour 2025

Volunteer Engagement

KLSO ran a pre-Earth Hour 2025 campaign focused on water conservation with the theme “Be Water Wise” from 19 to 22 March. Stickers promoting daily water-saving actions were distributed to 2,500 people at key locations in Thiruvananthapuram including Palayam Bus Stop, Statue Bus Stop, Shanghumugham Beach, and the Museum & Zoo premises. Six volunteers and staff engaged the public through interactive games, idea-sharing activities, and



awareness drives. LED bulbs were gifted to participants suggesting effective water and electricity conservation ideas.

Earth Hour Main Event



On March 22, a Cyclothon titled “Pedal for the Planet” saw 75 cyclists riding through key city points, flagged off by cycling legends Adimurthy Sir and Ramalingam Iyer. NCC Cadets from Govt. Women’s College were presented with a bicycle in recognition of their volunteer contributions.



KLSO launched a vibrant social media campaign featuring eight #BeWaterWise stickers and ten short videos on themes such as energy, water conservation, and pollution. Large sticker signboards were displayed at the Museum & Zoo.



The main Earth Hour event at the Thiruvananthapuram Museum & Zoo featured public interaction campaigns, a musical performance by *No Man’s Land*, and a symbolic Switch-off with a candlelight vigil. A press meet was also held where KLSO team highlighted the significance of Earth Hour and the need for collective climate action.



Beach Combing

The monthly shorebird monitoring in Thiruvananthapuram District took place on 9 March 2025, with eight volunteers led by Jayakrishnan at Perumathura and Reji Chandran at Poovar. The Poovar team recorded 13 migratory species, including Tibetan Sand-Plovers, Greater Sand-Plovers, and various terns, while the Perumathura team noted 11 species such as Greenshank and Caspian Tern.



“Sundara Theeram Suchithwa Sagaram” event



The KLSO team attended the inaugural session of the “Sundaratheeram Suchithwa Sagaram” beach cleanup initiative by the Kerala Department of Fisheries on 11 April 2025. Twenty-six volunteers from National College, Ambalathara, mobilized by KLSO, participated in the drive.

Koottam Carnival 2025

KLSO participated in the Koottam Carnival 2025 at Tagore Theatre, Thiruvananthapuram, on 26-27 April. The event showcased volunteerism and community engagement with around 30 NGO stalls. KLSO set up a stall featuring six exhibits on WWF’s work and volunteering with WWF, engaging visitors with interactive games. The State Director joined a panel on environmental careers.



Nature Connect - City Nature Challenge

WWF-India Kerala State Office actively participated in the City Nature Challenge (CNC) 2025 from April 25 to 28. Posters, infographics were spread through social media for

the event, and nature walks were conducted at 16 locations across Kerala, including pre-CNC walks at Punchakkari and Pavumba. Data will be compiled in the 1st week of May.



Others

Participation in Kulirma Summer Campaign by Energy Management Centre (EMC) Kerala

On 18 March, Sivakumar attended the Kulirma Summer Campaign and Angan Jyothi Program by EMC Kerala, aimed at combating rising summer heat and promoting e-cooking in Anganwadis. He met EMC leaders and NGOs to discuss Earth Hour collaboration across the state.



Broadcast of Interview with A K Sivakumar on All India Radio about Birds

On March 4, All India Radio aired a 15-minute interview with Sivakumar, highlighting his birdwatching journey and contributions.

Broadcast of Interview on World Water Conservation Day 2025

The State Director spoke on water conservation in Kerala on

Doordarshan Kendra, Thiruvananthapuram, broadcast live on 26 March and repeated multiple times on 27 March.



Invited Talk – Renjan Mathew Varghese - Role of Youth in Environmental Protection and Conservation organized by GRAMIUM & VYK Event at Aarupadai Veedu Medical College, Pondicherry

On March 1st, an event on “Role of Youth in Nature Conservation and Environmental Protection” was held, with State Director speaking on WWF’s conservation projects. Dr. Smitha Chandran, Associate Professor, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, spoke about how students can support conservation through research and academics. Around 250 medical students attended.



Panelist in the online discussion on Living in Harmony with Wildlife organized by Think Kerala

State Director, was a panellist in the *Think Kerala* online discussion on 30 March, alongside Pramod G. Krishnan IFS, environmentalist Prof. Kunhikrishnan, and wildlife



photographer Balan Madhavan. Attended by around 80 participants, the session featured engaging discussions and a Q&A.

Engagement with Loyola School Students

KLSO was invited to speak to the students of Loyola School, Thiruvananthapuram, as part of the externship program on 7th April at the Thiruvananthapuram M&Z. Renjan spoke to the students about WWF-India and its work pan-India and the Kerala State Office. Anushreedha spoke about volunteering and the programs like Dragonfly Festival (Wetland Biomonitoring), Magical Mangroves, various birding activities, and Citizen Science programs like City Nature Challenge and encouraged the students to register in the P4P portal.



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Published by WWF-India, Kerala State Office, Vanchiyoor P.O., Thiruvananthapuram - 695035
For private circulation only • Phone: 0471-2302265 • email: klso@wwfindia.net • web: wwfindia.org
Pre-Press: Soft and Soft, Sasthamangalam, Phone: 8547043499, Printed at: New Multi Offset, Tvp