WWF
NEWS LETTER
KERALA
2023

July-August 2023

# MruthikA

Newsletter of WWF - India, Kerala State Office

## FROM THE STATE DIRECTOR'S DESK

The months of July and August witnessed a wide range of activities. The Model Conference of Parties (MCOP IV), a student version of the Conference of Parties (COP) of the Convention on Biological Diversity, is providing a unique opportunity for school students from across the country to think, brainstorm, discuss, debate and negotiate terms and conditions towards biodiversity conservation. We were able to organize the Global Tiger Day at Silent Valley National Park with the support of the Western Ghats Nilgiris Landscape (WGNL) Program. The two-day event witnessed some impactful initiatives driven by around 30 Volunteers from across the State including technical sessions, activity sessions like communicating conservation by giving attractive captions to photographs, making placards, rally, etc. The Kerala Forests & Wildlife Department Team at Silent Valley provided us full ground support for the successful organizing of the event. Their major request to the organizers as well as to the Volunteers from across the State was to provide them with possible support whenever they are faced with Human-Wildlife Conflict issues and that we need to change our thinking from "Forest Department Tiger" to "Our Tiger". World Elephant Day was also organized at Thiruvananthapuram Museum & Zoo Compound, which included technical sessions, an Elephant Photo Exhibition, Elephant Stone Art Painting, Painting and Poster Making, a Public Interactive Quiz, etc. We organized a workshop on the Tide Turners Plastic Challenge (TTPC) at a school in Kollam that was hosting the NCC Camp. Around 300 NCC Cadets attended the sessions. We talked about plastics and plastic pollution - how the plastics we use on land are reaching our oceans, polluting the marine ecosystem, and harming marine life. Under the TTPC banner, we also conducted a beach cleanup campaign at Kollam with the support of Volunteers from SN College, Kollam. As in the previous years, with the help of our Expert Birders, Amateur Birders, and New Volunteers, we could conduct the Heronry Count in Thiruvananthapuram District covering around 11 locations, and Onam Bird Count. The water bird monitoring in Ramsar Sites is also being facilitated by us for Ashtamudi Lake in Kollam with the help of Volunteer Teams from colleges. With these wide-ranging activities in different locations across the State, we are able to bring in new people as Volunteers, and for most of them, this is the start of a long journey with us and they keep coming back to our events to contribute their time and effort driven by their passion. Through the various bird surveys, we have been able to regularly monitor ecosystems outside forests, regarding the change in their extent and quality.

**Renjan Mathew Varghese**
**State Director**

## IMPORTANT NEWS ON NATURE AND ENVIRONMENT

### Global

#### King Charles and Queen Camilla give environmental award to Indian conservationists

Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla presented the coveted Elephant Family environmental award to Indian conservationists — filmmaker Kartiki Gonsalves behind Oscar-winning documentary 'The Elephant Whisperers' and the Real Elephant Collective (TREC) of 70 Adivasi artists — at a ceremony in London. Gonsalves received the Tara Award, inspired by the sacred bond between elephants and humans to recognize extraordinary achievements in storytelling and advocacy for coexistence. The debut director of 'The Elephant Whisperers' collected the award, an elephant statuette as a nod to the wildlife conservation charity Elephant Family, from the royals at an Animal Ball at Lancaster House. The Elephant Family said the globally acclaimed documentary stands as a "testament to the beauty of India's wilderness, the wisdom of tribal communities, and the empathy that exists between people and animals who share the same space". "As Kartiki Gonsalves, a true champion for wildlife and nature, receives this esteemed award, Elephant Family honours her unwavering dedication and unyielding enthusiasm towards the preservation of our natural world," it noted. This year's Animal Ball was a celebration of indigenous communities, hosted by the Elephant Family in partnership with the King Charles-founded charity British Asian Trust. *(Source: The Hindu, 1 July 2023).*

## National

### India adds 664 animal species to its faunal database in 2022, 339 taxa to its flora

India added 664 animal species to its faunal database in the year 2022. These comprise 467 new species and 197 new records [species found in India for the first time]. The country also added 339 new plant taxa – 186 taxa that are new to science and 153 taxa as new distributional records from the country in 2022. The details of new discoveries and new records were released by Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav in Kolkata on July 1. The faunal discoveries have been compiled in a publication by Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) titled Animal Discoveries - New Species and New Records 2023, whereas floral discoveries are contained in Plant Discoveries 2022 published by the Botanical Survey of India (BSI). Among the major fauna species discovered are three new species and one new record of mammals; two new records of birds; 30 new species and two new records of reptiles; six new species and one new record of amphibia; and 28 new species and eight new records of fish. The mammal species discovered include two species of bats – *Miniopterus phillipsi*, a Long-fingered Bat, and *Glischropus meghalayanus*, a Bamboo-dwelling Bat – both from Meghalaya. Sela Macaque (*Macaca selai*), a new macaque species discovered in the western and central Arunachal Pradesh and named after the Sela Pass, is also among the highlights of Animal Discoveries 2022. The new records include *Macaca leucogenys,* a White-cheeked Macaque earlier found in Modog, southeastern Tibet, and sighted in India for the first time in 2022 in West Siang, Arunachal Pradesh. The list also includes *Ficedula zanthopygia*, the Yellow-rumped Flycatcher, earlier known from Mongolia, Transbaikal, southern China, Korea, western Japan, and found last year in Narcondam Island of the Andaman archipelago. (Source: *The Hindu, 1 July 2023*)

### India among the 12 countries responsible for 52% of the world's mismanaged plastic waste: Report

On July 28, 2023, the Earth saw its first Plastic Overshoot Day: The point at which the quantity of plastics exceeds the global waste management capacity, according to Swiss-based research consultancy Earth Action (EA). Nearly 68,642,999 tons of additional plastic waste will end up in nature this year, noted the 2023 Plastic Overshoot Day Report by EA. India is among the 12 countries, along with China, Brazil, Indonesia, Thailand, Russia, Mexico, the United States, Saudia Arabia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iran and Kazakhstan, which are responsible for 52 per cent of the world's mismanaged plastic waste, it pointed out. Under current scenarios, despite pledges and increased waste management capacity, increased production of plastics will lead to global plastics pollution tripling by 2040, it pointed out. Of the 159 million tonnes of plastics (which can be used only for a short time) to be produced globally in 2023, 43 per cent (68.5 million tonnes) will end up causing pollution, says the report. People living in Belgium are the top generators of plastic waste, with a yearly waste production of 147.7 kg per person. This is 16 times higher than in India, it said. Oman tops the list of countries in terms of mismanaged plastic waste, with a projected 111 kg of mismanaged plastic per person in 2024. India is in the bottom 12 countries.

The report said that by April 2024, almost half of the world's population will be living in areas where plastic waste has already exceeded the capacity to manage it. On September 5, it said, that the plastic waste produced worldwide will surpass the planet's waste management systems and will be called "Plastic Overshoot Day" Plastic Overshoot Day is determined based on a country's Mismanaged Waste Index (MWI). *(Source: Down to Earth, 31 July 2023)*

### Rajya Sabha passes Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill amid confusion, concerns

Rights to recognize forest land and register it to lie with the state government, clarifies environment minister. The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023 was passed by the Rajya Sabha August 2, 2023 after a brief debate on concerns and questions on the Bill by members of the Parliament. The Lok Sabha had cleared it on July 26, 2023. The Bill will now be known as Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980, which translates to Forest (Conservation and Augmentation) Act. *(Source: Down to Earth, 2 August 2023)*

## State

### KUFOS launches project to produce fish feed from organic waste

The Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) has launched an experimental project to produce fish meal from organic waste. The project aims at producing the protein required for fish feed from organic waste using black soldier fly larvae. Organic waste will be separated at source for the purpose. The project is being implemented in collaboration with Amala Eco Clean Private Limited, based in Alappuzha, which operates in the field of organic waste management, said KUFOS Vice-Chancellor T. Pradeep Kumar. If the pilot project is found successful, the program will be expanded to all districts, said the Vice-Chancellor. It will be a permanent solution to Kerala's biggest social issue of organic waste management, he added. The project also aims to produce various types of high-value export-oriented products that can be obtained from the larvae of soldier flies and explore various uses of larvae other than feed production, Mr. Pradeep Kumar said. *(Source: The Hindu, 31 July 2023)*

## SPECIES OF THE ISSUE

### White-rumped Munia
*Lonchura striata*

The only munia in its range with white on the lower back and rump. It has a blackish-brown head and back with pure white underparts and rump. Its back is finely streaked with pale shafts. Found in a variety of open landscapes including grasslands, shrubby open country, forest edges, thickets, plantations, village gardens, agricultural fields, and sometimes towns and cities.

## CHILDREN'S CORNER

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Crow, Sparrow, Pigeon, Bulbul, Robin, Swallow, Treepie, Myna, Woodpecker, Barbet, Kites, Owl, Sunbird, Egret, Koel

## ACTIVITIES OF WWF-INDIA KERALA STATE OFFICE

**Model Conference of Parties 4 (MCoP IV)**

The Orientation Program for MCoP IV was conducted in Delhi from July 3 to 5th. The two days included sessions on "Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Future", Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) basics: Aichi Targets to Post 2020 GBF targets, basics of Conventions and COPs, Communication and Conservation, Negotiations and Consensus building. The basics of SMART action planning, opportunities to Youth for Biodiversity Conservation. This was followed by a cultural evening and turned out to be a platform to bond informally. The students formed teams and planned a project and made project proposals with timelines. The final day started with opening remarks by dignitaries from WWF-India, Ms Neha Raghav, Director, Environment Education, and a keynote address by Mr. Karan Bhalla, Chief Operating Officer, A video message by Mr. David Cooper, Acting Executive Secretary, CBD, Montreal was shown to the delegates. Ms. Shreya, Senior Manager - Content and Training, then took forward the Pledge and Commitment, which was reciprocated by the delegates. Mr. Anurag Pratap, Vice President I, Digital Inclusion & Sustainability Leader was the Chief Guest, and he addressed the gathering. Mr Ravi Singh, Secretary General and CEO spoke to the gathering. Closing and vote of thanks were given by Ms. Farida Tampal, State Director.

### Nature Connect

**• Biodiversity Register of Pangode Military Station**

The recon curvey was carried out on the morning of 12th July. The Survey Report was prepared and shared with Army Public School authorities for discussion and further action. A copy was also submitted to Mr. Lalit Sharma on July 19th for his kind advice.

**• Bird Watching Trail for Little Kites students of GHSS, Aruvikkara**

A bird watching trail was conducted by WWF-India for the students at Govt. Higher Secondary School, Aruvikkara. There were 30 students from the Science Club and the Little Kites of the School.

## People 4 Planet

**• Global Tiger Day 2023**

WWF-India joined hands with Silent Valley National Park (SVNP) to observe Global Tiger Day 2023. The State Director and Senior Education Officer led the event and twenty-six volunteers across the State took part in it at Silent Valley National Park from the 28th - 30th of July 2023 with many interactive campaigns. Eleven officials from SVNP also became part of the event. The event began with a talk by N Ganesan, Asst. Wildlife Warden, highlighted the park's unique characteristics and conservation values. The second session focused on Tigers, their role in the forest ecosystem, threats they face, and conservation challenges. The last program was a Caption Contest, where volunteers selected the best captions and created a poster series. The second day involved a nature walk, where volunteers spotted endemic species like Lion Tailed Macaque and Malabar Giant Squirrel. Public awareness rally in Mannarkkad Town, where 75 students from the NSS Unit and the "Kattuthee" volunteer team participated. The meeting was concluded by suggesting four future activities: a social media campaign, an awareness session on Tigers for school students, a creative theme on Tigers, and a campaign on nature conservation.

Participation Certificates were printed and distributed to all the participants. The Activity Report was prepared and shared with the WGNL Office and the Wildlife Warden of Silent Valley National Park. The posters on Tiger Conservation with the captions prepared by volunteers was shared with them and published through social media.

## GTD 2023 Poster

### Pleading for Protection

We all know she is the Mother of all of us
She is Nature the Emerald Woman
She is home to many creatures
One of the creatures – the great Bengal Tiger

His life is royal like a King
The Big Cat leads a solitary life
His unique path is fierce
He wears his invisible attitude as a crown

Now the proud growling sound is fading.....

Humans poaching them for several reasons
Our greedy activities like
habitat fragmentation and climate change
leading to the death of the Bengal Tiger

We are aware of the fact that
We are all the children of Nature
One among us is Endangered
We want to avoid conflicts with them

We want to protect them
We want to promote the Conservation Strategies
Nowadays we are ensuring the protection for them
For love of the Bengal Tiger

***Amritha P.J., IX-B, JNV Periya, Kasargod***

**• World Elephant Day 2023**

WWF-India, Kerala State Office and Western Ghats Nilgiris Landscape (WGNL) Program Division observed World Elephant Day 2023 at Thiruvananthapuram on 11-12 August 2023 jointly with the Department of Museum and Zoo and Mathrubhumi SEED. On the first day, Sanjayan Kumar IFS, CCF (Social Forestry and IT) Kerala Forests and Wildlife Department addressed the gathering and released the Malayalam version of the book, "Elephants – the Super Creatures". He spoke about his experiences with Elephants in the field. Mr. Satheesan N.V., Deputy Wildlife Warden (Retd.), Agastyamala Range, spoke about the importance of Elephants in the ecosystem and how they have been part of our lifestyle for long time. There were 57 participants including students from various colleges, public, Museum and Zoo staff, WWF Staff and Volunteers. The second day started with a wider campaign, painting competition for school students, open public interactive quiz and stone art program. Elephant photos taken by WWF Volunteers and banners on Elephant Conservation were displayed in the premises of Museum. Along with these, a photo booth was put up with hashtags for taking selfies to promote Elephant Day through social media. The two-day event saw an outreach of more than 2000.

**• TTPC Workshop @TKMHSS, Kollam for NCC Cadets**

WWF-India Kerala State Office conducted an Orientation Session at TKMMHHS, Kollam on Tide Turners Plastic Challenge on 31 August 2023. The target group was 600 NCC cadets who were attending their 10-day camp. The session started with a welcome address by Col. H S Sidhu S M, Commanding Officer 7(K) NCC Battalion. Lt. Col. The first session on "Know Plastics to No Plastics" was led by Mr. Renjan. Following that the Plastic Ocean, a movie detailing the menace posed by plastics to oceans was screened. Anushreedha S S led the second session on "Plastic Brand Auditing." After the break, A K Sivakumar led the activity session on the Plastic Literacy Test followed by the session on TTPC. Mr. Renjan took a second session on "Knowing & Reducing Your Plastic Footprint". The cadets interacted well during the Q&A session.

**• Heronry Count – Thiruvananthapuram**

The Heronry Count was conducted at 33 sites of Thiruvananthapuram, on 23rd July jointly with the Social Forestry Division, Kerala Forests and Wildlife Department, with the participation of 28 volunteers. A count of 725 nests were recorded among 6 different species- chiefly Oriental Darter, Indian Cormorant, Little Cormorant, Little Egret and Black-crowned Night Heron. A noteworthy hike of 55.03% nests were observed (467 nests previously) from as many as six species. Interestingly, around 10% of abandoned nests were spotted, which points to an early breeding season for the birds. The press release of the Heronry Count was shared with newspapers like The Hindu, Times of India, New Indian Express, and Deshabhimani and they gave good visibility and outreach for the event.

**• Waterbird Monitoring Program in Ramsar Sites**

Volunteers of WWF-India Dr. Nirmal George and Ms. Thrinisha, led monthly Waterbird Monitoring Program at the Ashtamudi Lake, one of the Ramsar Sites in the State on 19th July and 20th August. In July, they reported 26 species from Asramam Mangroves and 37 species of birds from Munroe Island including a Knob-billed Duck and Yellow wattled Lapwing. The very active heronry of Gray Heron from Asramam Mangroves was an important observation. In August, they reported 28 species. They observed that the mangroves are getting highly polluted with both degradable and non-biodegradable wastes.

**• Beach Cleanup at Kollam Beach**

WWF-India Kerala State Office in association with SN College, Kollam conducted the monthly cleanup at Kollam Beach with the participation of 34 student volunteers. Dr. Jisha S, Dr. B Hari, and Dr. Divya T Dharan led the cleanup drive under the supervision of Senior Education Officer. Around 43 Kg of glass bottles, 20 Kg of Plastic bottles, 17 Kg of SUPs including food wrappers, cutlery and straws, 22 Kg of paper waste were collected. 4-5 Kg of diapers and other sanitary waste was also collected and then handed over to the Haritha Karma Sena of Kollam Corporation.

**• Onam Bird Count**

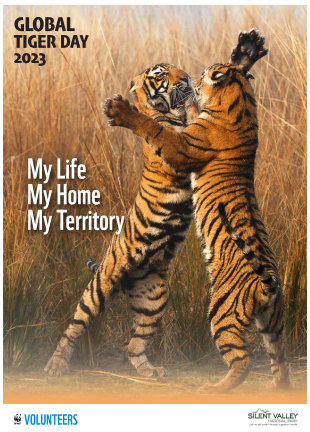
The Kerala State Office organized an Orientation Session for Onam Bird Count (OBC) for 40 students from five colleges in the Museum Auditorium, Thiruvananthapuram on 20th August 2023. The sessions covered in the program were bird Watching, documentation, and common birds. Experience from the previous year's Campus Bird Count (CBC) was shared by Ms. Vijayalekshmi, Nature Education Officer, at Trivandrum Natural History Museum. KLSO coordinated the OBC in the capital district and became top in the State in the number of birders, number of eBird Checklists, and number of species recorded. The Volunteers in Thiruvananthapuram recorded 95 species on the 25th, 102 on the 26th, 101 on the 27th, and 83 species on the 28th of September. As part of this, CBC was conducted in All Saints College, MG College, Govt. Women's College, Mar Ivanios College, Zoo Campus in Thiruvananthapuram, SN College, and Fatima Mata National College in Kollam.

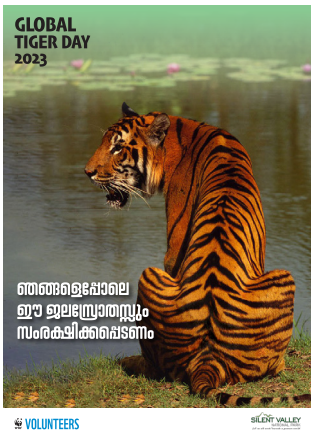
**Independence Day 2023 observation at KLSO**

The staff members and families of Kerala State Office observed Independence Day on 15th August 2023 at the State Office. The flag was hoisted at 9:30 AM and then everyone saluted the National Flag and sang the National Anthem.

**Onam Celebration in Office**

Onam being the State Festival of Kerala, the State Office observed it on 30th August. Staff along with family gathered at the State Office and made *Pookkalam* and took photos.





This set of posters on Tigers is an outcome of the session "Communicating Conservation" during Global Tiger Day 2023 in which the teams of Volunteers coined these attractive captions to be used in social media campaign.


## EDITORIAL BOARD

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