THE HABITATS TRUST

ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

UNFOLDING STORIES, BUILDING SOLUTIONS



A single Bengal Florican was sighted in Dudhwa Tiger Reserve after three years of surveys. It wasn't a sign of recovery — it was the signal to begin one, a reintroduction plan to restore the species and the habitat it depends on. Waiting for nature to recover on its own was no longer viable. The challenge called for a solution, one that combined science, habitat management, and long-term collaboration.

Across India's forests, grasslands, rivers, coasts and seas, stories like this continue to unfold, some just beginning, others years in the making.

Beneath the waves of India's west coast, remotely operated vehicles helped reveal the little-explored world of mesophotic reefs. In Tadoba's Kolsa range, native saplings took root across degraded forest, an early sign of what it takes for a landscape to heal. Across the Konkan Sadas, behavioural studies explored how communities relate to nature, helping design interventions that respond to local realities.

Different habitats. Different species. Different timelines. Yet each story marks a step in a longer journey — from the problems we face today towards the solutions we strive to build.

No single organisation can build these solutions alone. Progress is shaped by researchers gathering evidence over years, communities living alongside wildlife, forest departments safeguarding protected areas, and educators, local organisations, government agencies, field practitioners and countless others whose contributions often go unseen.

During 2025–26, THT worked alongside partners across research, restoration, technology, behavioural science, education, and on-field action. Not every outcome is visible yet. Some will take years to emerge.

This report brings together stories from across this work: supported by science, strengthened by collaborations, and sustained by an aspiration that habitats, species, and people can thrive together.



THE HABITATS TRUST



THE ROLE WE CHOSE

The pursuit of ecological solutions is a legacy that long predates The Habitats Trust — one we are proud to carry forward.

THE BEGINNING

When Roshni Nadar Malhotra and Shikhar Malhotra founded The Habitats Trust (THT) in 2018, the conviction was clear: India's natural habitats must be conserved, for its wildlife and its future generations. The purpose was never to reinvent conservation, but to strengthen the work already underway and help it reach further.

In the early years, that meant putting resources where a difference could be made: backing researchers, organisations and practitioners whose work addressed critical issues on the ground.

Working alongside these partners revealed something important early on: some of the most urgent conservation problems were also the least visible — and some of the greatest opportunities for change lay in the gaps.

Gaps between the species everyone tracked and the many that remained overlooked. Between scientific knowledge and on-ground implementation. Between protected areas and the habitats disappearing beyond their boundaries. Between promising local efforts and the resources needed to make them last. The Habitats Trust chose to work in these gaps.

Over time, this focus shaped a collaborative, action-oriented approach — driving field-based research, encouraging technological innovations and amplifying local leadership.

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

As the ecological challenges facing India grow more complex, so too does our approach. THT has evolved from primarily providing philanthropic funding to taking a more hands-on role as a nature-oriented problem solver. This approach combines design-led thinking, scientific rigour and collaborative action to develop tangible solutions across diverse landscapes.

In 2025–26, that evolution found expression in a simple idea: THIS PROBLEM TO THAT SOLUTION — a clear direction from identifying challenges to developing solutions and turning them into impact on the ground.

The conviction remains. Our role has evolved.

EIGHT YEARS. EIGHT PROGRAMMES. ONE SOLUTION-DRIVEN MISSION.

The path to a conservation solution is rarely straightforward. A terrestrial landscape cannot be secured without understanding the behavioural science of communities living alongside wildlife. A marine habitat cannot be explored effectively without integrating the latest monitoring technology. Across ecosystems, different disciplines and approaches come together to address complex challenges.

That is why our work spans eight programmes, each bringing a different perspective, expertise and set of tools to the work.

THE EIGHT PROGRAMMES

- Marine Conservation
- Terrestrial and Freshwater
- Ecological Restoration
- Conservation Behavioural Science
- Technology for Conservation
- Education and Awareness
- Communications and Branding
- THT Grants

REACH IN NUMBERS

Eight years on, THT's work has grown into a nationwide network of partnerships and conservation action.

32 States and Union Territories

130+ On-ground Partners

52+ Species Supported

60+ Organisations and Individuals reached through grants

The following chapters explore each programme and its work during 2025–26 — not as isolated initiatives, but as interconnected stories that come together to build lasting conservation solutions across India.



LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES — THE VISION





MESSAGE FROM THE TRUSTEES
SHIFTING THE NEEDLE

India stands at a defining moment. As the nation charts its pathway towards becoming a Viksit Bharat, one truth must anchor every ambition we hold: India's natural capital, its forests, rivers, wetlands, grasslands, mountains and oceans, will be central to whether those targets are met. Development and ecological resilience are not separate journeys; they are the same journey, and India's natural systems are the foundation on which it rests.

At The Habitats Trust, we are responding to this moment by generating solutions and piloting them at the frontier, so that our country's prosperity and its natural wealth advance together. We see ourselves as trailblazers in this endeavour.

The pace of change in India is remarkable. Our cities are growing, creating new industries, connecting communities and opening up possibilities that would have seemed unimaginable a generation ago. The India we are building will be larger, more prosperous and more ambitious.

Yet our rivers, forests, grasslands, wetlands, mountains and oceans remain part of the foundation on which our lives and our economy depend. They provide water, food, livelihoods and protection, often without being seen or counted. As India grows, the health of these natural systems will become ever more central to the country's future.

The question, then, is not whether India should grow, but how. How do we build for the future while strengthening the very systems that make that future possible? We believe this is one of the defining questions of our time.

The answer cannot lie in choosing between the economy, ecological resilience and human wellbeing. These are not competing priorities; they are deeply connected, and the strength of each depends on the strength of the others.

This understanding is shaping the next chapter of The Habitats Trust.

We are thinking more deeply about where meaningful change happens and what allows it to endure. A challenge may appear to concern a single species, a landscape or a single community, but the forces shaping it are often far larger. The opportunity lies in understanding those connections and identifying the points where a different idea, a better decision or a new way of approaching a problem can create an impact far beyond its immediate context.

Sometimes that point is science or technology. Sometimes it is policy, behaviour or markets. And sometimes it is simply bringing the right people and ideas together. There is no single formula. What matters is identifying where an intervention can unlock wider change, and creating the conditions for that change to travel further than where it began.

That is what we mean by shifting the needle.

India has an opportunity to lead this thinking. A country of our scale cannot pursue prosperity without accounting for the natural systems that sustain it. Equally, the choices India makes today can offer valuable lessons to other parts of the world confronting the same challenge: how to grow while keeping the foundations of that growth strong.

For us, this is what the next chapter is about. It means looking beyond familiar boundaries, remaining curious about what is possible, and being deliberate about where we focus our attention, resources and effort. It means moving beyond isolated interventions to understand the larger systems around them, and identifying where action can unlock lasting change.

The future will belong not simply to those who can build faster, but to those who can build without weakening the foundations on which progress depends. That is the future we want to help shape — and it is why, for India's path to Viksit Bharat, safeguarding our natural capital is not a constraint on ambition but the very basis of it.

With resolve and purpose

Roshni Nadar Malhotra (Chairperson) and
Shikhar Malhotra (Chairman)



LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES — THE WORK



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Hello,

This year, our work moved from the strength of an intention to the strength of an institution. We began asking not only what challenges and aspirations demanded our attention, but what kind of organisation could meet them at scale, and we built towards that answer with deliberate, sustained effort.

Ten capacity-building initiatives strengthened our team this year, bringing together some of the finest minds from across the world to sharpen our thinking on strategy, science and scale. This was groundwork for a deliberate evolution, from an organisation that provides financial, technical and technological support, to one that stands as a solutions-providing organisation in its own right. That shift now runs through our philosophy, our culture and the language we use to describe ourselves.

Our team grew alongside this ambition, bringing new capability into every corner of our work, and our programmes were realigned to move together rather than in parallel. The Impact Programme took decisive new steps this year, and more than fifty projects are now active across thirty-two states and Union Territories of India, a footprint that reflects both the challenges we face and the aspirations we hope to meet, and our resolve to address them directly, on the ground, in partnership with those who know their landscapes best.

Perhaps the clearest expression of this year's ambition was the launch of THAT Group, a global platform built to connect and champion extraordinary on-ground action wherever it happens. It is a statement of intent: as a solutions-providing organisation, we look not only to address problems and challenges but to meet aspirations, through solutions rooted equally in ecology and economy, drawn from a genuinely global community of practitioners we intend to help build.

None of this happened without setbacks, recalibrations and hard-won lessons — the honest texture of real institution-building. Each one sharpened our direction rather than slowing it.

We move into the year ahead with a clearer sense of who we are becoming, and a stronger foundation to build upon.

With resolve and ambition,
Rushikesh Chavan

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE STORIES

Every story in this report is the result of many hands, many minds and many partnerships.

- Researchers who spend years documenting species and ecosystems.
- Government agencies and forest departments that enable conservation on the ground.
- Communities and local organisations whose understanding of a landscape is built over decades.
- Scientists developing new knowledge.
- Educators inspiring the next generation.
- Partners strengthening each other's work.

And THT TRUSTEES AND LEADERSHIP, whose vision has guided our work from its earliest days, alongside the THT TEAM, whose everyday work connects, supports and amplifies all of these efforts.

This report celebrates not only the work of the Trust, but the people and partnerships who carry every idea from this problem to that solution.



THE HABITATS TRUST



THE INVISIBLE CONNECTIONS

Marine Programme 2025–26: Strengthening the links that sustain India's oceans

THAT SOLUTION

MARINE PROGRAMME 2025–26

Strengthening the links that sustain India's oceans

A coral larva no larger than a grain of sand drifts through the ocean for weeks.

Carried by ocean currents, it may travel hundreds of kilometres before settling onto a reef it has never seen. Its journey is invisible, but it may help replenish a damaged reef far away.

Countless such journeys unfold beneath the ocean's surface every year, quietly connecting reefs, fish populations, seagrass meadows and the people whose lives depend on healthy oceans. These hidden connections allow marine ecosystems to recover, adapt and thrive. Yet many remain poorly understood.

Understanding them — and conserving them — became a defining focus of The Habitats Trust's (THT's) Marine Programme in 2025–26.

During the year, the programme advanced studies on reef connectivity, generating new insights into how ocean currents link reefs into larger ecological networks. It also expanded the frontiers of marine research by using emerging technologies to explore deeper reefs and document previously unrecorded coral habitats.

Beyond ecological connections, the programme strengthened the human connections essential for safeguarding India's marine habitats, bringing together researchers, conservation organisations, government agencies and coastal communities to address shared priorities and enable coordinated action.

THE PROGRAMME

India's marine ecosystems present complex conservation challenges that require sound scientific evidence and collaborative action. Yet the knowledge needed to inform conservation decisions is often limited or unavailable.

Working across India's coastal, offshore and deep-sea environments, THT's Marine Programme bridges this gap through research, field surveys, emerging technologies and collaborative partnerships. By generating scientific evidence and fostering collaboration, it enables informed conservation planning and coordinated action for marine biodiversity.

THE PEOPLE

Endless seas. Invisible connections.
A coast-wide coalition.
Advancing marine conservation through science, collaboration and action:

Abhishek Jamalabad (Programme Lead)

Deepika Sharma (Senior Executive)

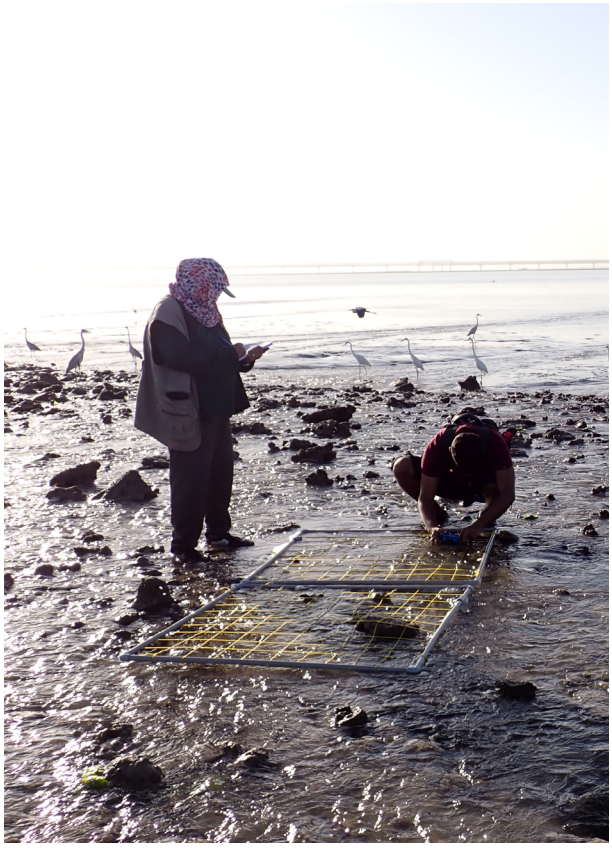
Sri Chakra Pranav T. (Associate Manager)

Shantanu Sukul (Consultant)



TRACING THE CONNECTIONS IN 2025–26

UNDERSTANDING THE CONNECTIVITY

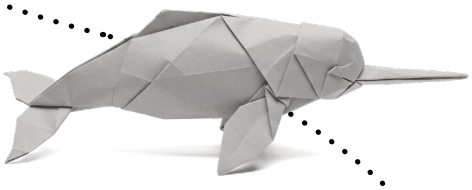


During 2025–26, the Marine Programme began mapping coral reef connectivity along India's west coast using oceanographic modelling and field data. The research is generating new insights into how reefs in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka function as part of an interconnected network, providing evidence needed to guide future reef conservation.

EXPLORING NEW DEPTHS



Much of India's deeper reef ecosystems remain beyond the reach of conventional diving and have rarely been explored. Using **ROVs and sonar technologies,** the programme surveyed mesophotic reefs. These surveys documented reef structures, fish communities and habitats that had not been previously recorded, expanding scientific understanding of India's deeper marine habitats.



DISCOVERING UNRECORDED CORAL HABITATS

Field surveys across Lakshadweep continued to advance research on India's coral reefs. In remote reef systems rarely visited by researchers, the team documented coral habitats that had never been formally reported.

The most striking find was a colony of *Pavona clavus* that may be among the oldest living coral structures known from the region. The team has also identified a previously unexplored coral patch that appears considerably healthier than many others, at a time of rapid reef degradation.

In places like these, every discovery expands our understanding of how little we still know—and how much remains to be protected.

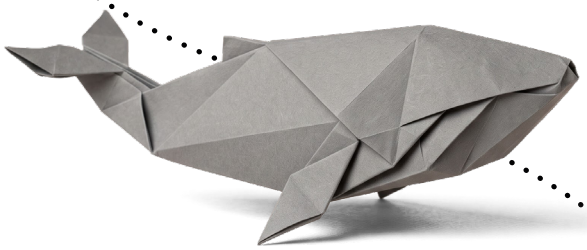


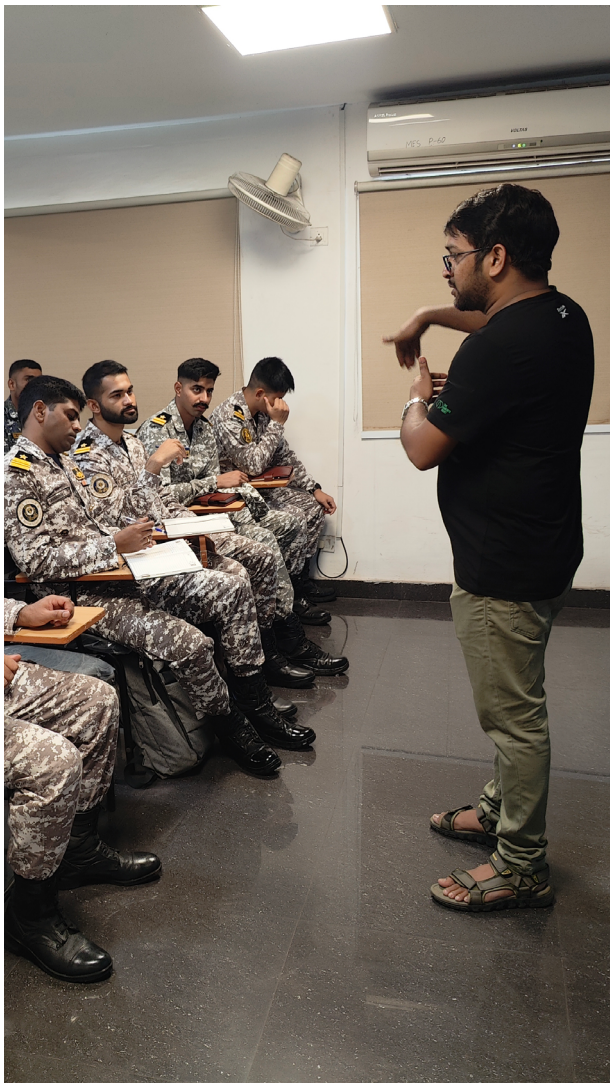
COLLABORATING WITH PEOPLE WHO SHARE THE SEAS

Conservation at sea depends as much on collaboration as it does on science. In 2025–26, the Marine Programme strengthened partnerships, shared knowledge and collective action across three priority areas, with each at a different stage, from early groundwork to models ready for prototyping.

- Marine Mammals: Initiated collaboration with the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard to establish data-collection training, laying the groundwork for future interventions to reduce unintended harm to marine wildlife.
- Lakshadweep Communities: Developed nature-inspired regenerative tourism models that minimise ecological impacts while safeguarding the islands' ecological and physical integrity and supporting local livelihoods and aspirations.
- Shark Conservation: Initiated discussions with researchers and practitioners to map conservation priorities, identify knowledge gaps, and lay the foundation for a coordinated approach to shark conservation in Indian waters.







Regenerative Tourism: A New Way of Thinking

The Marine Programme is exploring nature-inspired regenerative tourism by applying biomimicry as a practical design approach for low-impact development in Lakshadweep. Drawing on nature's models, systems and strategies, the approach seeks to design tourism that regenerates ecosystems rather than simply reducing environmental harm.

Grounded in the understanding that natural systems have evolved highly efficient survival strategies over millions of years, the programme is examining how principles such as circular resource use, self-sufficiency and energy efficiency can inform modern tourism solutions.

The regenerative tourism models are exploring new ways of managing water, energy and other resources while supporting local communities and livelihoods.

SPOTLIGHT STORY

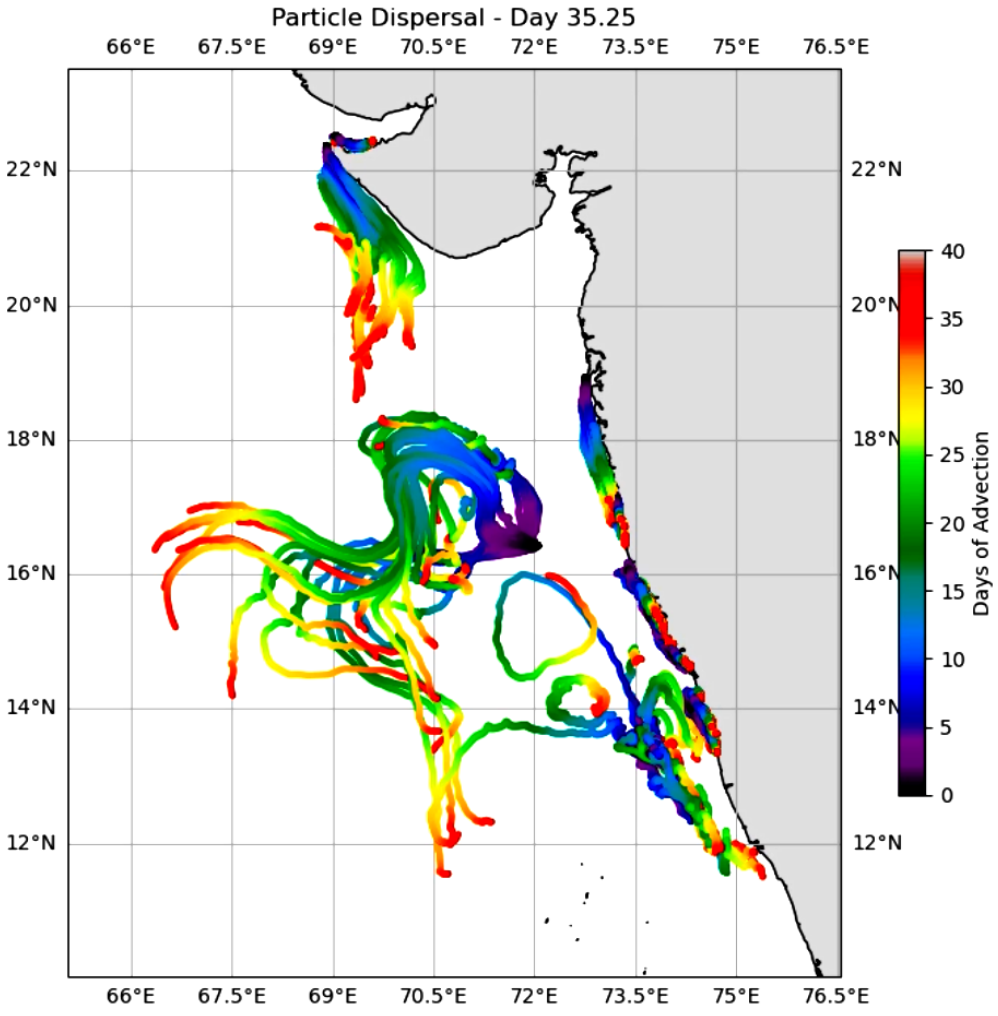
A Coast-wide Coalition

For years, India's western coastal reefs were a conservation blind spot. Scattered across Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka, these ecosystems support rich marine life and the communities that depend on them. Yet, compared to the better-known reefs of Lakshadweep and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, they remained under-researched and were often studied in isolation rather than as a single ecological system.

Recognising this gap, THT's Marine Programme began laying the foundations for a collaborative approach in 2022. In 2025–26, that effort culminated in the establishment of the **West Coast Coral Reef Consortium.**

Convened by THT and its partners, the Consortium brings together researchers and conservation organisations to share knowledge, work together and build a common approach to conserving coral reefs along India's western coast. It is helping shift the focus from individual reef sites to understanding the coastline as one interconnected ecosystem.

What coral larvae have done for centuries across the open ocean, the West Coast Coral Reef Consortium is now doing along the coast—connecting what was always meant to be one.



MILESTONES THAT SHAPED 2025–26

9
ORGANISATIONS

18
RESEARCHERS & PRACTITIONERS

Came together to form the **West Coast Coral Reef Consortium** for the conservation of West Coast coral reefs, with a shared vision and aligned objectives.

150 METRES
DEPTH SURVEYED

Using ROV and sonar technologies to explore India's mesophotic reef ecosystems.

29
REGENERATIVE, NATURE-INSPIRED TOURISM MODELS

Developed as a guide for low-impact, regenerative tourism in Lakshadweep.

TO BE CONTINUED... FY 2026–27

Building on the partnerships, knowledge and insights developed in 2025–26, the Marine Programme will focus on translating them into practical conservation action across India's coastal and marine ecosystems.

STRENGTHENING REEF CONSERVATION

Working with the West Coast Coral Reef Consortium to develop a shared field manual for reef monitoring, restoration and social assessments, while expanding coral resilience research in the Gulf of Kutch and supporting locally led reef management initiatives across Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka.

UNDERSTANDING DEEPER WATERS

Co-developing standardised approaches for using ROVs to survey and understand mesophotic reef ecosystems.

SUPPORTING LOCALLY-LED MARINE CONSERVATION IN LAKSHADWEEP

Strengthening the capacity and skills of grassroots conservationists and scientists in Lakshadweep, and enabling the continued monitoring and safeguarding of its ecosystems through a critical El Niño season.

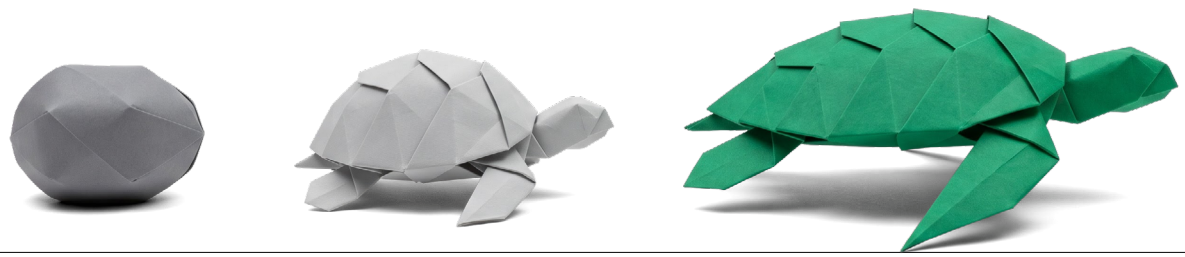
REIMAGINING ISLAND FUTURES

Prototyping regenerative tourism solutions in Lakshadweep in collaboration with local stakeholders, building on models developed during 2025–26.

ADVANCING MARINE SPECIES CONSERVATION

Strengthening collaborations for marine mammal conservation, including data-collection training with the Indian Navy and Coast Guard, while working with practitioner networks to identify priorities and opportunities for shark conservation in India.

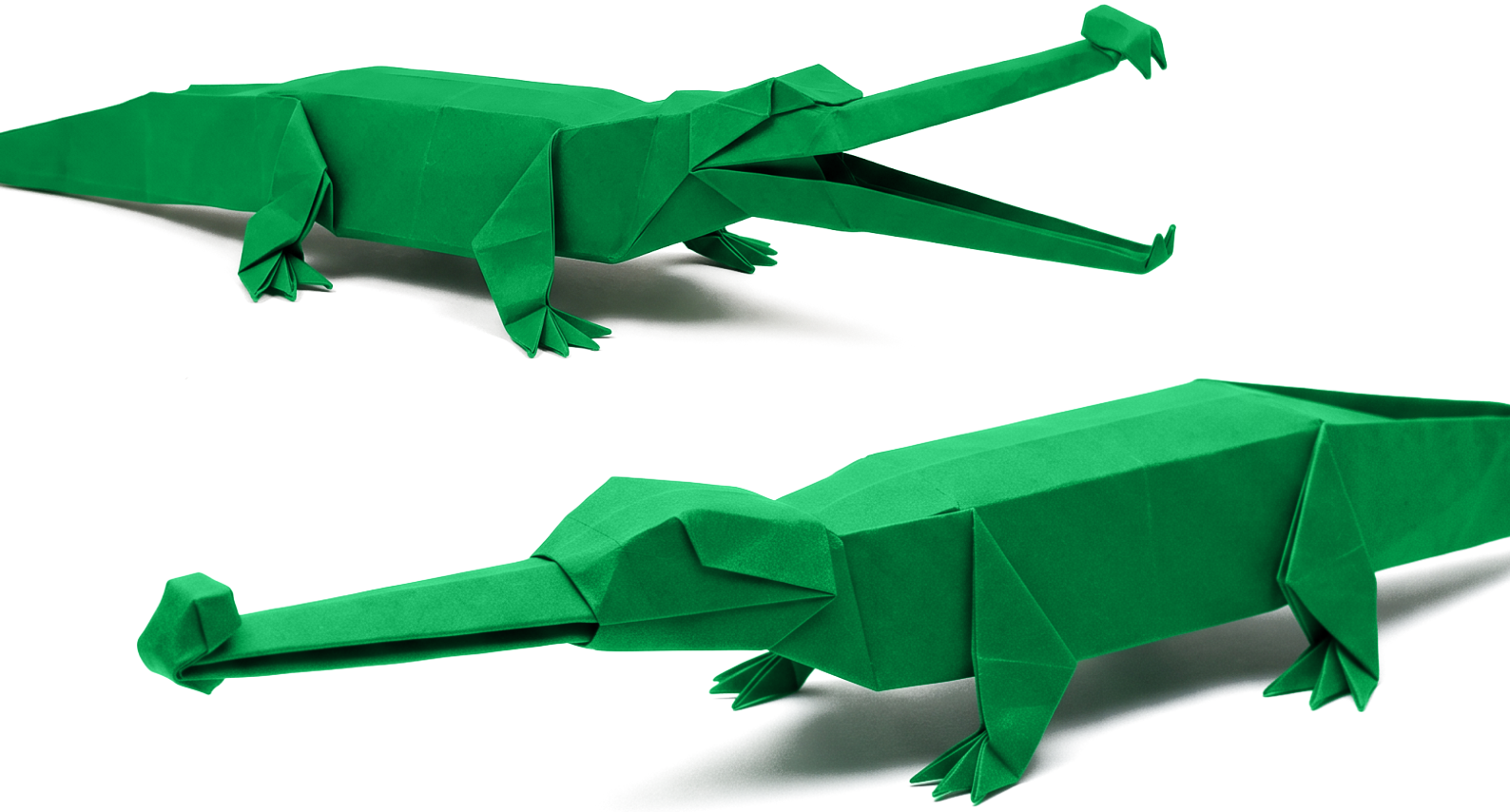
The tide keeps turning — and so does our work, strengthening the connections that matter most.



THE HABITATS TRUST

SECURING THE WHOLE

Terrestrial and Freshwater Programme 2025–26: Towards Functional Ecosystems where Nature and People Thrive



THAT SOLUTION

TERRESTRIAL AND FRESHWATER PROGRAMME 2025–26

Towards Functional Ecosystems where Nature and People Thrive

The map calls them wastelands. Ground realities reveal a different story.

For much of the year, the Sadas — laterite plateaus on the Konkan coast — lie dry and quiet. Beneath scattered boulders, vipers find refuge while lizards bask on sun-warmed stone. Carved into the same rock are the outlines of rhinoceroses, elephants, and tigers, believed by some to be among the oldest forms of nature documentation.

Come the rains, the seemingly barren landscape transforms into a mosaic of wildflowers, ephemeral wetlands, and endemic species that emerge briefly before retreating once more into obscurity. But what unfolds above the surface is only part of the story. Beneath it, porous, weathered laterite absorbs and stores monsoon rain, recharging groundwater, feeding nearby springs, and supporting agriculture throughout the year.

Yet the Konkan Sadas continue to be classified as wastelands on official maps. A word that carries significant consequences — it strips these ecosystems of recognition, weakens their protection, and leaves them vulnerable to land-use change.

The Konkan Sadas, in fact, exemplify a conservation paradox: ecosystems rich in biodiversity, cultural heritage, and ecological function continue to be dismissed as wastelands. It is a pattern repeated across India, where grasslands, wetlands, rivers, and rocky plateaus remain overlooked despite the vital role they play in regulating water, connecting habitats, and sustaining communities.

Addressing this paradox lay at the heart of THT's Terrestrial & Freshwater Programme, guiding its work across 18 States and one Union Territory during 2025–26 and achieving:

- 1,28,275 sq. km of direct field impact across active project sites and protected areas.
- 6,36,567 sq. km of broader influence through connected corridors, watersheds, policy engagement, and research adoption.

THE PROGRAMME

India's terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems face mounting pressures from land-use change, fragmented management, and limited understanding of their ecological value. Many remain overlooked despite the essential roles they play in regulating water flows, supporting biodiversity, and sustaining livelihoods.

The Terrestrial & Freshwater Programme combines science, local knowledge, and institutional partnerships to strengthen conservation where it is needed most. Working across interconnected ecosystems rather than isolated sites, it supports species recovery, improves habitat management, informs conservation policy, and builds the knowledge needed to keep ecosystems functional over the long term.

THE PEOPLE

Diverse landscapes. Complex challenges.
Securing functional ecosystems for nature and people to thrive:

Core Team:
Anup Prakash Bokkasa (Programme Lead) | Devyani Singh (Associate Manager) | Kaushik Sarkar (Sr. Executive) | Maxim Rodrigues K (Sr. Executive) | Lakshmi Kousalya (Executive)

Extended Team:
Nupur Bhave (Conservation Behaviour Science), Sankarshan Rastogi (Impacts), Sanket Joshi (Policy)

Field Co-ordinators and Consultants:
Harshad Tulpule, Kumari Alka, Meenu Dhakad, Aparna Watve

SECURING FUNCTIONAL LANDSCAPES IN 2025-26

Healthy ecosystems depend on connected habitats, functioning ecological processes, and the people who live alongside them. Guided by this understanding, the programme worked across India's forests, grasslands, rivers, and high-altitude ecosystems during 2025–26.

Research, monitoring, and technology generated the evidence needed to guide conservation action, while collaboration with government agencies, research institutions, conservation organisations, and local communities translated that evidence into meaningful outcomes on the ground. Together, these efforts addressed conservation challenges at the ecosystem level rather than focusing on isolated sites or individual species.

ALLUVIAL GRASSLANDS

India's grasslands support unique wildlife and ecological processes, yet many have become fragmented and remain under-recognised. During the year, the programme supported species recovery and habitat interventions to strengthen these ecosystems.



Bengal Florican | Terai Grasslands | Uttar Pradesh

The Bengal Florican is a critically endangered grassland bird whose survival depends on the alluvial grasslands of the Terai. In the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, the Programme recorded just a single Bengal Florican after three years of surveys. The findings point towards reintroduction as the only viable path to restoration of the species. In 2025-26 the team:

Developed the proposed Bengal Florican Reintroduction Programme with the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department, identifying Assam for the source population.

Secured an in-principle agreement with the Assam Forest Department and Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust to establish a breeding centre in Assam and provide founder stock for Dudhwa.



Pygmy Hog | Floodplain Grasslands | Assam

Working with Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and Aaranyak, the Programme continued habitat management across the floodplain grasslands of Orang National Park.

Manual removal of woody plants: Cleared woody vegetation across 20 hectares of critical grassland, including *Lagerstroemia parviflora, Bombax ceiba, and Sterculia villosa*.

Invasive plant cover was managed across nearly 49 hectares of priority grassland.

These interventions support future Pygmy Hog releases while improving the management of priority grassland habitat.

SECURING FUNCTIONAL LANDSCAPES IN 2025-26

LOWLAND RAINFORESTS

Conservation planning continued across the lowland rainforests of Northeast India, laying the groundwork for long-term protection of the Hoolock Gibbon and its habitat.

- Strengthening Science and Stewardship: With support from THT, Aaranyak advanced Hoolock Gibbon conservation across five northeastern states by integrating community engagement with landscape, genetic, and field research. Outreach programmes engaged nearly 200 students, while landscape assessments revealed decades of land-use change. Field surveys, genetic sampling, and ongoing hormonal research strengthened understanding of species population, identity, and stress physiology — deepening the scientific foundation for their long-term conservation.
- Building Local Capacity: Through THT's partnership with Conservation Initiatives (CI), 19 community members from Assam, Meghalaya, and Nagaland have been trained in biodiversity monitoring and data collection including ecological surveys, passive acoustic monitoring, and camera trapping.



HIGH-ALTITUDE ECOSYSTEMS

High-altitude ecosystems are among India's most fragile landscapes, where extreme climatic conditions, limited resources and human–wildlife interactions present conservation challenges that extend beyond habitat protection.



- The Programme worked with the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and continued supporting the Animal Birth Control programme across the Ladakh landscape, where free-ranging dogs pose a significant threat to wildlife.
- Nature People Network Foundation, an implementation partner, completed a baseline study of the Rangdum Wetlands, a high-altitude Important Bird Area (IBA) in Ladakh, vital to regional water security, biodiversity, and local livelihoods. Through habitat surveys and species sampling, the project documented floral and aquatic invertebrate diversity, producing a species directory, habitat map, and policy recommendations.

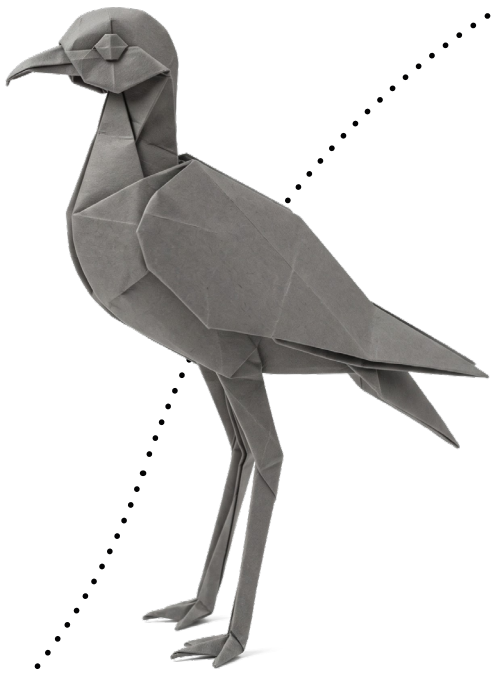
SUPPORTED BY SCIENCE

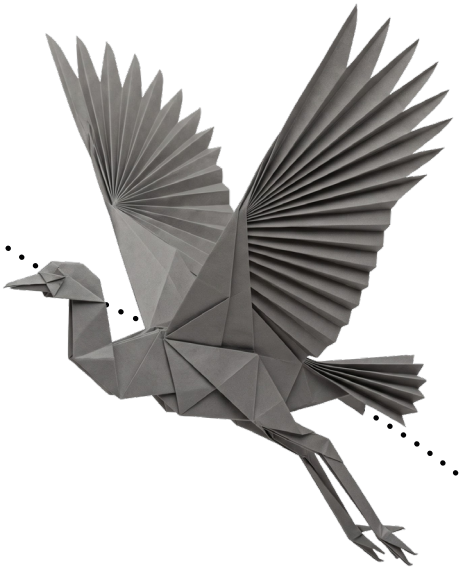
Scientific research and emerging technologies helped close knowledge gaps, improve monitoring and support conservation decisions across landscapes.

- **Genomic Risk Assessment:** The National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) developed a novel genomic risk assessment framework, with support from THT, to assess genetic risks associated with species being bred for reintroduction.
- **Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM):** PAM uses automated recording devices to capture environmental sounds, enabling the non-invasive monitoring of wildlife through their vocalisations. Two projects within the Terrestrial & Freshwater Programme are using this technology to generate information for species conservation.
- In Northeast India, the PAM-recorded calls of the Hoolock Gibbon were processed in collaboration with CI, supporting long-term monitoring of the species in the region's dense lowland rainforests, where conventional surveys are often challenging.
- In the Eastern Ghats, the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Tirupati is using PAM to assess the current status and distribution of the Jerdon's Courser, generating information to support the species' conservation.
- **Riverine Wildlife Monitoring Portal:** As part of a THT-supported project on conserving riverine wildlife in Bihar, the Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT) developed a portal for tracking Gangetic River Dolphin populations across the Bhagalpur, Katihar, Patna, and Munger districts. The portal hosts population trends, river flow, hydrological, and socio-economic data, providing officials with information to support conservation planning.



- **Wildlife Rescue SOPs:** THT supported RESQ Charitable Trust (RESQCT) in developing eight Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for wildlife rescue and monitoring under the ECOTRACK project.
- **Biodiversity in Climate Action :** The Nature Conservancy Center, India (TNCC), another THT partner, advanced efforts to align biodiversity conservation with climate mitigation across India's forests, grasslands, and croplands. Working with IISER, Kolkata, the team began eDNA sampling to validate biodiversity models, covering over 68 locations in Madhya Pradesh. Through expert consultation, including a workshop with 24 specialists, six India-specific climate pathways were finalised. Three field pilots are now underway, including invasive Lantana removal in a landscape shared by elephants and local communities, alongside a new monitoring and evaluation framework.
- **Hydrogeological Assessment:** The Terrestrial & Freshwater Programme team signed an MoU with the Society for Promoting Participative Ecosystem Management (SOPPECOM) for conducting hydrogeological assessments in key lateritic plateaus of Maharashtra's Konkan region.





STRENGTHENED BY PARTNERSHIPS

Conservation at the landscape scale depends on institutions working together. During the year, partnerships translated scientific knowledge into policy, strengthened protected areas, and supported community-led conservation.

- Advocating for India's Grasslands: Conservation Action Trust (CAT) advances efforts to protect India's grassland ecosystems through research, on-ground engagement, and policy advocacy. THT's support helped it to identify key habitats and local stakeholders across Northeast and South India, guided by a review of existing grassland policies and research. Site visits and dialogue with grassroots groups, including The Grasslands Trust in Maharashtra, deepened understanding of ground-level challenges. Sustained outreach to recognise and protect grasslands — including letters to the Prime Minister, Chief Ministers, and Union Ministers —continued with consistent state-level follow-up.
- Advancing Snakebite Research and Community Safety: THT's support enabled its partner, The Liana Trust, to make significant strides in snakebite mitigation and snake conservation in Karnataka. The serpentarium supplied WHO-standard venom for antivenom production and research, and hosted a veterinary workshop on snake medicine. Research began on bite triggers, predatory behaviour, and protective gear efficacy, alongside ecological studies on Russell's vipers. The programme reached over 5,000 students, along with farmer and community engagement. Nearly 300 snake rescuers completed initial training, and permissions were secured for pioneering telemetric research on Russell's vipers.



- Powering the Roadmap to SoIB 2027: With support from THT, partner Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) led major technological advances as part of the State of India's Birds (SoIB) partnership: a collaborative, multi-institutional effort spanning research institutions, conservation organisations, and government bodies across the country. The Mapping Your Neighbourhood Avifauna (MYNA) platform was upgraded with improved mobile usability, monthly database updates, and features such as birding-effort heatmaps. Automated high-performance computing reduced the processing time for over 70 million bird records from three months to 33 hours. These advances directly informed IUCN Red List assessments for 12 Indian bird species, strengthening the scientific foundation for the SoIB 2027 report.
- Mobilising Community-led Conservation: THT's project with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in Nagaland helped engage 26 villages, community institutions, youth groups, and traditional bodies across the Ntangki landscape to co-create a shared vision for rainforest conservation. Through participatory mapping, biodiversity surveys, and local capacity building, the project is laying the scientific and social groundwork for lasting, community-led conservation.
- Expanding Bird Monitoring: With THT's support, our partner NCF advanced bird diversity documentation and local birding capacity across under-sampled regions of India this year. Sampling expanded into new areas, including Mizoram and Bihar, uncovering important and rare species. To sustain long-term monitoring, the project built local alliances and produced regional content such as webinars, Mizo-language material, and pocket guides for Mizoram and Ziro, Arunachal Pradesh.

SPOTLIGHT STORY

Understanding Karnataka's Overlooked Landscapes

The Kalyana Karnataka region is a predominantly dry landscape with significant biodiversity value, but receives far less scientific attention than wetter regions such as the Western Ghats. Home to species including Striped Hyenas, Golden Jackals, Indian Grey Wolves, and Bengal Foxes, the region is now being studied in greater detail.

To address this knowledge gap, Holématthi Nature Foundation (HNF), in partnership with THT, conducted surveys across 12 districts covering 2,382 sq. km. Over 504 days of camera-trap surveys, the team documented differences in how species use the landscape.

Wildlife Insights:

- 27 mammal species documented
- Dholes recorded in Chincholi Wildlife Sanctuary, nearly 200 km beyond their previously known range, with individuals also using adjoining reserved forests in Bidar district.
- Blackbuck and Nilgai occur across forests and agricultural areas.
- Four-horned Antelope and Chinkara depend more heavily on protected habitats.
- The conversion of open grasslands to maize and sunflower fields continues to affect grassland-dependent species such as the Bengal Fox.

The findings strengthened understanding of the region's biodiversity and HNF proposed expanding Chincholi Wildlife Sanctuary by 10,000 acres and strengthening protection for adjoining reserved forests. Following community consultations, scientific assessments, and approval by the Karnataka State Board for Wildlife, 2,877 acres were notified as the Chittapur Conservation Reserve — Karnataka's 16th Conservation Reserve.

Together, through these interventions, Kalyana Karnataka's unique landscapes are gaining the recognition they deserve, paving the way for their long-term conservation.



"Researchers report first-ever documentation of dholes in Kalyana Karnataka region," The Times of India (September, 2024).

"Wildlife board declares 2,877 acres of forest land as protected reserve in Kalaburagi," The Hindu (April, 2026)



MILESTONES THAT SHAPED 2025–26

19
PROJECTS

16
PARTNERS

Connecting research, field expertise and institutional support across the country.

2,478

DOGS STERILIISED ACROSS LADAKH

Addressing the single biggest threat to wildlife in this high-altitude landscape, in partnership with the Bombay Natural History Society.

10,451

INVASIVE TREES REMOVED

Cleared in Assam's Orang National Park as part of pygmy hog habitat restoration.

TO BE CONTINUED... FY 2026–27

The next chapter picks up where this year leaves off, sharpening the programme's focus on terrestrial and freshwater conservation.

SECURING PRIORITY LANDSCAPES

- Finalise the Bengal Florican reintroduction proposal and formalise collaboration with the Uttar Pradesh and Assam Forest Department.
- Continue surveys and identify priority conservation sites in the Deccan regions of Karnataka and Telangana.
- Prioritise key conservation areas in the Konkan Sadas region of Maharashtra.
- Develop management plan for the Changthang and Karakoram Wildlife Sanctuaries.
- Begin meadow restoration in Melghat Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra.
- Support the declaration of recommended priority sites as protected areas.
- Release endangered captive-bred Pygmy Hogs into the grasslands of Manas National Park.
- Monitor the post-release survival and movement of wildlife in Maharashtra.
- Scale up the wetlands programme, launched in 2025-26.

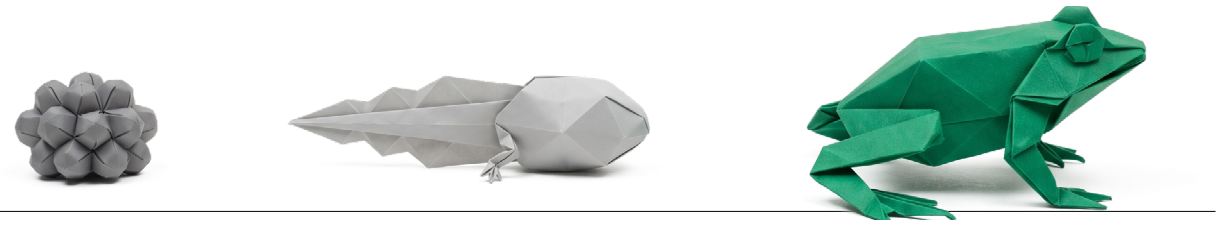
INFLUENCING CONSERVATION POLICY

- Support the development of a national grassland management policy for India.
- Identify genetic rescue scenarios for tigers and lions and draft supporting policy documents.

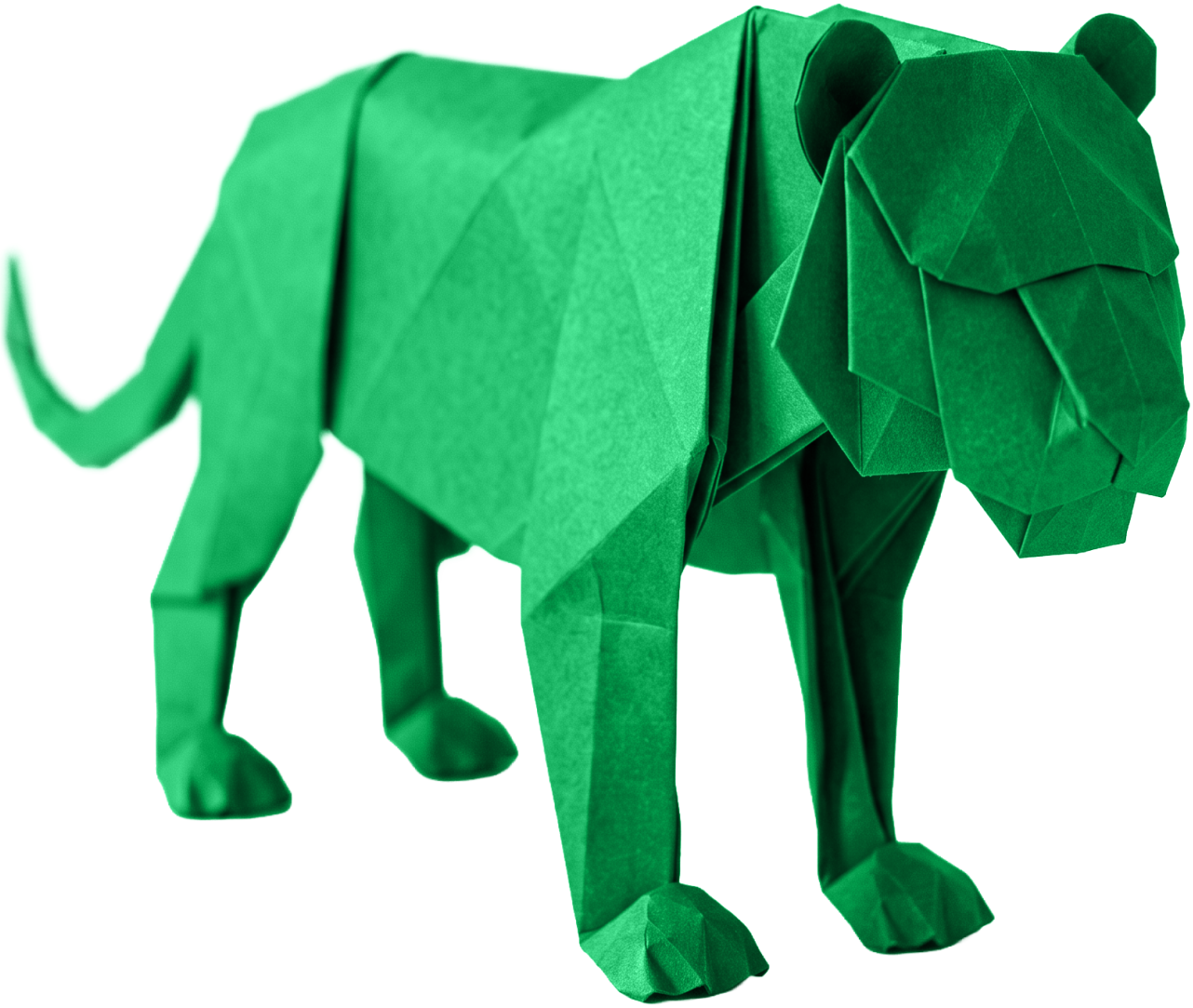
BUILDING STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS

Build new conservation partnerships in overlooked regions, including projects focused on securing wetlands and the Vindhyan landscape of South Uttar Pradesh.

Understanding is the first step toward conserving natural spaces. Our work will continue to secure and sustain them, for people, through nature.



THE HABITATS TRUST



BRINGING BACK WHAT BELONGS

Eco-Restoration Programme 2025–26: Rebuilding Habitats from the Seed Up

THAT SOLUTION

ECO-RESTORATION PROGRAMME 2025–26

Rebuilding Habitats from the Seed Up

WHAT BELONGS HERE?

Every restoration journey begins with this question. The answer is rarely immediate. It lies in understanding the landscape — what belongs, what remains, what has been lost, and what nature needs to recover.

Eco-restoration is about rebuilding the ecological foundations that enable ecosystems to function, recover, and adapt, such that, they require progressively fewer interventions over time. At its core, it means bringing back what belongs: native grasses, herbs, forbs, and epiphytes; microbes, fungi, insects, birds, and mammals; and the intricate ecological relationships that connect them all.

Guided by this approach, THT's Eco-Restoration Programme worked across diverse landscapes in 2025–26: from dry deciduous forests and mountain plantations to ancient freshwater swamps. No two landscapes followed the same path to recovery. Each presented distinct ecological challenges and opportunities, requiring interventions grounded in science and shaped by field experience, including baseline surveys, native seed collection, nursery development, and long-term monitoring.

The work undertaken in 2025–26 marked one step in a much longer journey, whose outcomes will unfold over years and across generations.

THE PROGRAMME

With much of India's — and the world's — natural habitats converted or degraded over the past two centuries, conservative estimates suggest that barely 3% remains both faunally and functionally intact.

Against this backdrop, THT's Eco-Restoration Programme helps degraded ecosystems recover by restoring native biodiversity. Rather than seeking to return ecosystems to exactly what they once were, the programme supports strategies that are ecologically appropriate to each landscape.

Across its work, the programme identified one of the most significant barriers to ecological restoration in India: the limited availability of regionally appropriate planting material. Addressing this challenge became a defining priority, through native seed collection and the development of native plant nurseries.

Equally important is working with local communities, whose knowledge, participation and stewardship are essential for restoration efforts to remain locally relevant, ecologically effective and enduring.



THE PEOPLE

Hundreds of hectares. Thousands of native seeds and saplings. Forests taking root.
Restoring ecosystems and bringing back what belongs:

Robin Kurian Abraham (Programme Lead) · **Nishant Seth** (Deputy Manager) · **Swapnil Sonwane** (Associate Manager) · **Kiran Prabhu** (Associate Manager) · **Sushil Chakma** (Executive)

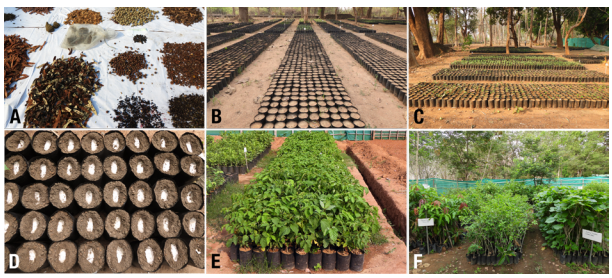
SEEDS OF RESTORATION IN 2025–26

During 2025–26, the programme worked across different parts of the country, each with its own ecological challenges, opportunities, and lessons. The following pages highlight the early work laying the foundations for restoration across some important landscapes.

ROOTING RECOVERY IN TADOBA

Tadoba's dry deciduous forests are among the harshest landscapes in which the programme works, characterised by extreme heat, long dry spells, and a core zone shared with wildlife. Working alongside the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation (TATRCF), the team spent the year building the scientific foundations for restoration through baseline surveys, seed collection, and species propagation.

- **Baseline Surveys Conducted:** Completed baseline floristic surveys in January 2026 to guide restoration interventions.
- **Biodiversity Secured:** Collected seeds from 150 plant species, representing 24% of TATR's recorded flora, with 50 species successfully germinated.
- **Nursery Foundations:** Raised 10,000 locally sourced saplings in a THT-established nursery and procured an additional 19,605 saplings belonging to 49 species to support restoration efforts.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Presented project findings at the Ecological Restoration Alliance (ERA) Conference in Panchgani in October 2025.



LESSONS FROM TADOBA
What the landscape taught us

- **Eco-restoration tested patience**

Every field day in Tadoba was demanding. Extreme heat, dry spells, and wildlife encounters shaped the realities of working in one of India's hottest landscapes. Restoring forests demanded patience, preparation, and respect for a living ecosystem.

- **Green did not always mean healthy**

Some of the lushest-looking patches were dominated by native bamboo. Although they appeared forested, they showed signs of ecological degradation. It was a lesson that degradation is not always obvious, and that invasive behaviour is not limited to exotic species.

- **Resilience ran deeper than it appeared**

Some restored saplings that appeared lifeless were still alive below ground, with intact roots capable of re-sprouting. Recovery could not be measured by a single glance but by sustained monitoring and an understanding of the plant's life cycle.

- **Challenges often became opportunities**

Working with the State Forest Department initially appeared challenging due to systemic complexities. However, the partnership opened opportunities to work across larger landscapes and advance restoration at scale. It reinforced how strong institutional collaborations were essential for long-term eco-restoration.

BUILDING THE NURSERY IN WAYANAD



In Wayanad, the challenge wasn't a lack of will to restore degraded land but a lack of regionally appropriate planting material. Initiated in February 2026 with regional conservation NGO **FERNS**, this project set out to close that gap by building nurseries and developing restoration plans for North Wayanad.

- Addressing a Gap: The existing forest department nursery produces 25,000 saplings representing just 16 tree species, many of which are neither native to Wayanad nor to India.
- Building Native Nurseries: Establishing 3 native plant nurseries expected to produce saplings representing nearly 250 regionally native tree species in their first year of operation.
- Seeds Secured: Collected seeds from 210 regionally native species; of which 188 have been sown, and 37 have germinated.
- Mother Plant Programme: Sown seeds from 295 mother plants, with 62 successfully germinated.
- Planning Recovery: Developing 3 site-specific restoration plans for Evergreen, Semi-evergreen, and Moist Deciduous habitats, aimed at ecological restoration of more than 200 hectares of monoculture plantations.

NAVIGATING SYSTEMS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH



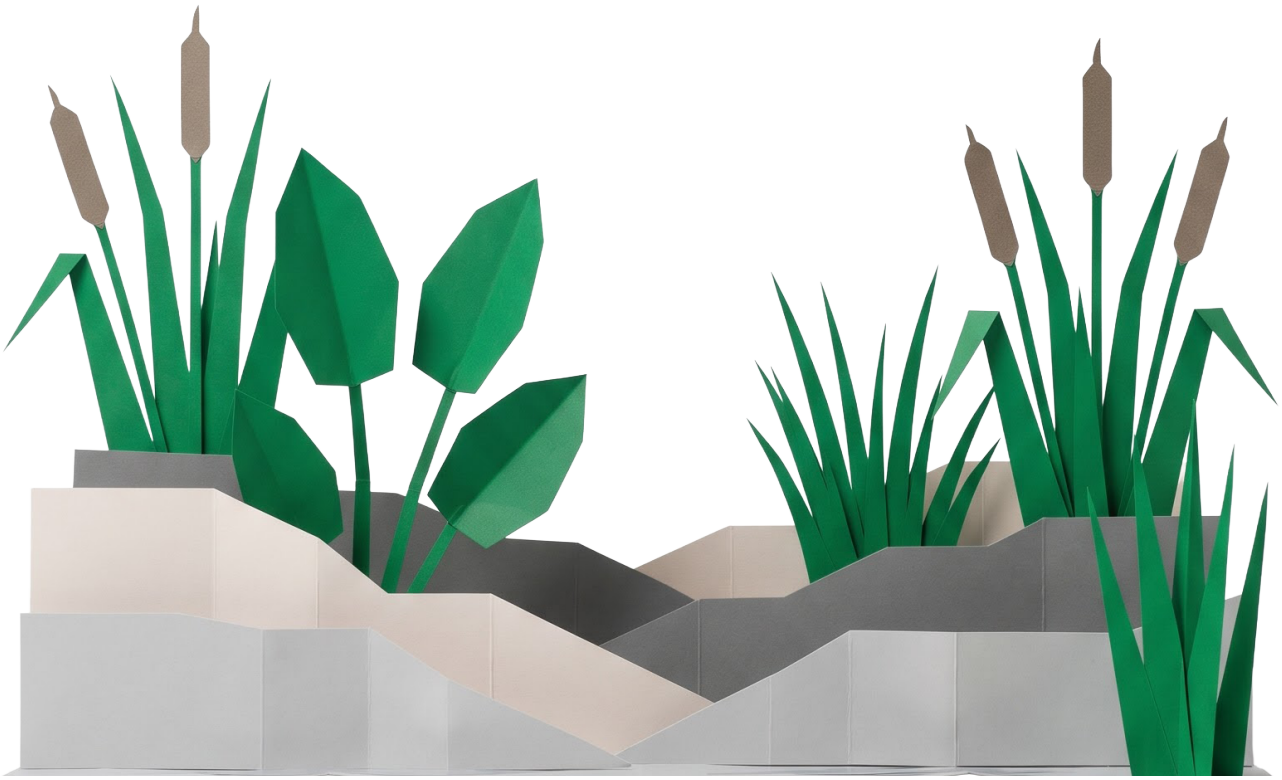
In Himachal Pradesh, the work looked less like planting and more like an internal mapping of systems — to find where ecological restoration was possible within existing forest department schemes. Working with the Rajiv Gandhi Van Samrakshana Yojana and related state plantation schemes, the programme assessed plantation sites, nurseries, and forest department initiatives for building a roadmap.

- Site Evaluations: Assessed 21 plantation sites covering 41 hectares (17 in Sirmaur, 4 in other districts) and 6 forest department nurseries, noting a limited diversity of about 30–40 tree species.
- Ecological Baselines: Conducted opportunistic surveys at 3 intact reference sites (Chail WLS, Shilli WLS, and Churdhar WLS) to establish restoration models.
- Community Integration: Conducted detailed social surveys with Self-Help Groups to develop a roadmap for improved nursery diversity and promotion of eco-restoration best practices.
- Project Status: Following the deputation of key Forest Department officials, the project is exploring partnerships with local NGOs while navigating alternative official channels to sustain implementation.

PRESERVING SWAMPS OF THE WESTERN GHATS

Myristica forests are rare freshwater swamps surviving in only a handful of pockets across the Western Ghats, many still unmapped. Alongside Snehakunja and other organisations in Karnataka, the programme spent the year locating, understanding, and beginning to protect these unique ecosystems.

- Expanding Knowledge: Expanded the known distribution of Myristica Swamp Forests through extensive mapping.
- Understanding the Ecosystem: Installed microclimate loggers across representative swamps to study temperature, humidity, and soil moisture patterns. Vegetation surveys were also conducted across 33 plots to develop reference models for swamp flora and hydrological conditions.
- Prioritising Action: Undertook a prioritisation exercise across 132 swamp sites to identify the most suitable locations for future conservation interventions.
- Nursery Foundation: Raised 10,000 saplings belonging to 21 swamp and associate evergreen species in project nurseries.
- Restoration on the Ground: Planted 3,295 saplings belonging to 21 species across 6 sites, covering 3.75 hectares.
- Communities Engaged: Conducted design-thinking workshops in 2 villages to integrate local knowledge and ensure restoration efforts aligned with community priorities.
- Project Status: The project is currently ON HOLD while THT explores alternative approaches and partnerships to better support the programme's long-term restoration objectives.



SPOTLIGHT STORY

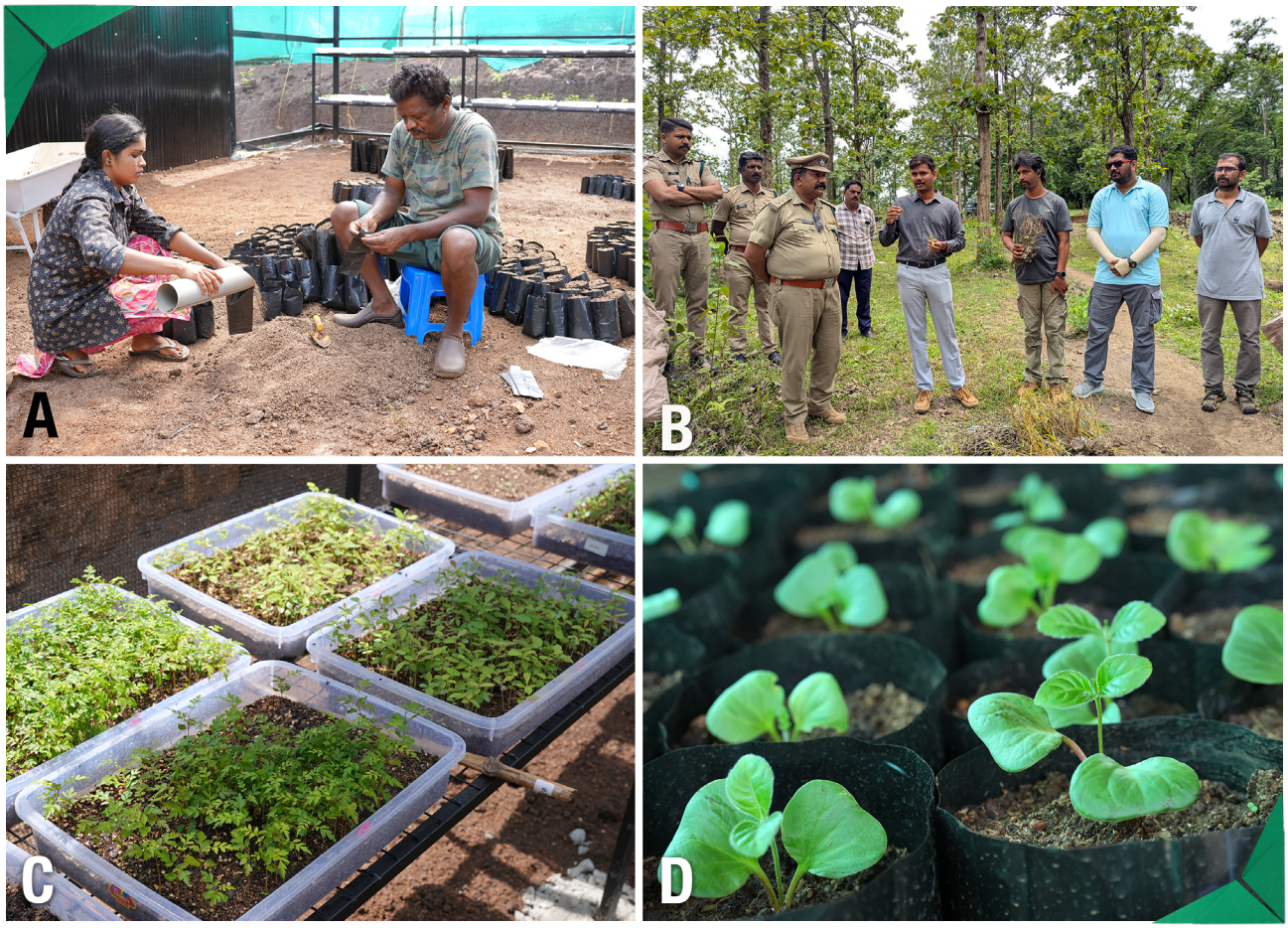
What Survival Reveals

In ecological restoration, planting regional flora is only the beginning. Long-term success depends on whether they thrive, and this begins with choosing the right species.

At Kolsa in Tadoba's core zone, the team planted 5,000 saplings belonging to 47 regionally native species across 20 hectares of degraded forest during the monsoon of 2025. Regular monitoring has recorded a **70% survival rate**, encouraging plans to restore 100 hectares of degraded natural forest land while raising the necessary saplings to achieve this target.

The survival rate offered an early but optimistic lesson: native species are better equipped to take root, survive and persist. However, the uncertainty of global climate change dynamics will challenge even the ability of these regional species (whether planted or naturally regenerating) to thrive.

The right species, in the right place, indeed sets recovery in motion.



MILESTONES THAT SHAPED 2025–26

110+

ON-GROUND SURVEYS COMPLETED

Including 60 newly discovered sites, significantly expanding knowledge about important freshwater ecosystems.

360

NATIVE PLANT SPECIES SEEDS SECURED

150 species in Tadoba + 210 species in Wayanad, laying the foundation for future restoration across dry deciduous, moist deciduous, semi-evergreen and evergreen habitats.

52,000

NATIVE SAPLINGS GERMINATED SO FAR

Across the three native plant nurseries in Wayanad and one in Tadoba, addressing one of India's biggest restoration gaps.

TO BE CONTINUED... FY 2026–27

In 2026–27, the programme will build on this year's groundwork to advance the next phase of ecological restoration.

SCALING RESTORATION IN TADOBA

Restore 100 hectares of degraded forest in the TATR Core Area and raise more than 100,000 saplings representing over 150 native species.

SECURING *MYRISTICA SWAMPS*

Explore alternative approaches and partnerships to continue the conservation of *Myristica Swamp* Forests.

GROWING THE RIGHT SPECIES

Strengthen native nurseries and seed collection to ensure the availability of regionally appropriate planting material for future restoration.

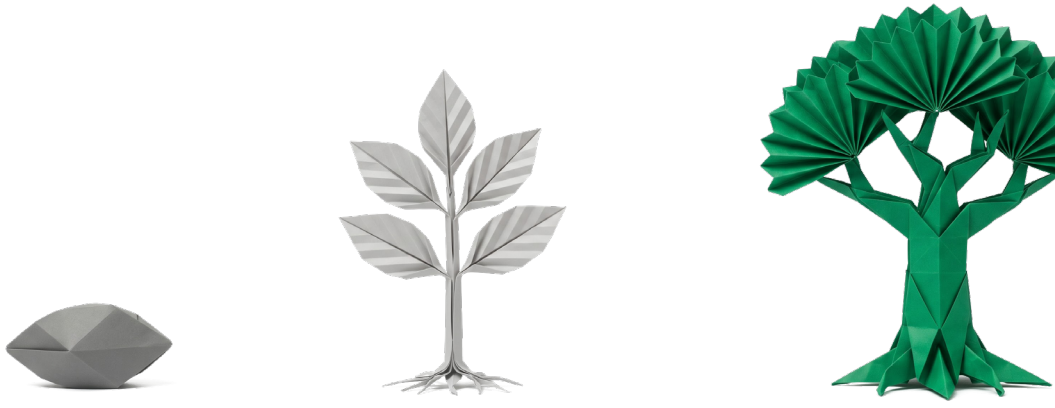
MOVING FROM PLANS TO RECOVERY

Translate ecological assessments and restoration models developed in Wayanad and Himachal Pradesh into on-ground implementation efforts.

WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES AND INSTITUTIONS

Strengthen collaborations with local communities, conservation organisations, and government agencies to enable restoration at larger scales.

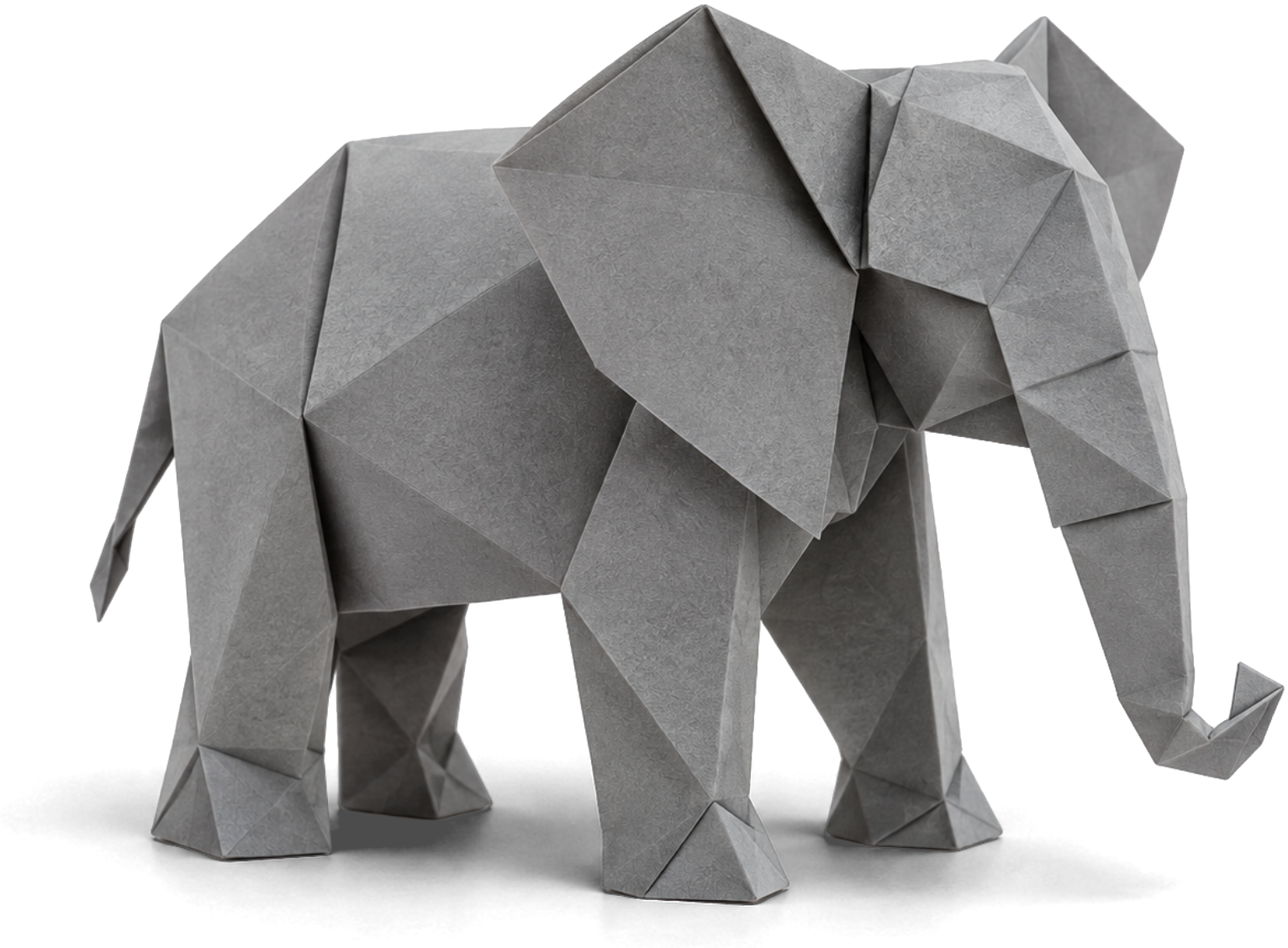
The restoration continues securing what remains, asking what belongs, and creating the conditions for nature to recover and thrive.



THE HABITATS TRUST

THE OTHER STORY

Conservation Behavioural Sciences Programme 2025–26: Understanding People to Strengthen Conservation



THAT SOLUTION

CONSERVATION BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES PROGRAMME 2025–26

Understanding People to Strengthen Conservation

Every landscape tells two stories.

One is revealed through habitats, wildlife and ecological surveys. The other, less visible, emerges through people: What shapes their attitudes towards nature? What influences the decisions they make about it? How do identity, culture, livelihoods and lived experiences shape the way people relate to wildlife? Why do communities embrace some conservation initiatives but resist others?

Answering these questions — and understanding this other story — defined the work of THT's Conservation Behavioural Sciences (CBS) Programme during 2025-26.

In the Konkan Sadas, for example, the ecological story unfolded through laterite plateaus, wildflowers and seasonal pools. The human story emerged through surveys with more than 7,000 people, that explored their relationship with these landscapes. Over the year, this approach expanded through large-scale behavioural and socio-economic research across parts of coastal Maharashtra, Goa, Lakshadweep and the Terai landscape.

The programme also embraced newer research methods, including eye-tracking, to better understand how people perceive and respond to wildlife. Together, these efforts generated one of the programme's largest behavioural evidence bases to date, helping inform locally relevant conservation interventions.

THE PROGRAMME

Conservation is as much about understanding people as it is about understanding ecosystems.

The CBS Programme uses behavioural science, psychology and social research to understand how people relate to conservation. This helps THT design interventions that protect the interests of local communities and are more likely to work in practice.

Across diverse landscapes, the programme combines interviews, large-scale household surveys and specially designed tools. Experienced field teams use sound sampling methods and a code of ethics to keep this work reliable and realistic while shaping practice, policy and lasting behavioural change.

THE PEOPLE

Extensive surveys. Deep conversations. Meaningful insights.

Understanding people to build a stronger foundation for conservation:

Dr. Vivek Belhekar (Senior Consultant)

Nupur Bhave (Consultant*, 2025-26)

**Following the reporting period, Nupur Bhave transitioned to the role of Associate Manager - Policy.*



BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE ACROSS TERAI

Behavioural research begins long before the first survey is conducted.

Across the Dudhwa–Pilibhit–Katarniaghat landscape, the programme strengthened its field capacity by onboarding coordinators, training field teams and developing representative sampling methodologies. To ensure representation, they clustered villages using government datasets, before fieldwork commenced.

This preparation laid the foundation for one of the programme's largest field exercises during the year. It generated evidence across behavioural and socio-economic indicators — from conservation identity and motivation to livelihood measures such as income, expenditure, crop depredation and compensation, water access and land ownership.

At a glance:

- **3,945** surveys completed in **Dudhwa**
- **1,427** surveys completed in **Pilibhit**
- **1,019** surveys completed in **Katarniaghat**
- Nearly **300 behavioural and socio-economic indicators** assessed



UNDERSTANDING COASTAL COMMUNITIES IN GOA

Effective marine conservation begins with understanding how coastal communities interact with marine ecosystems.

Following the training and onboarding of field teams, the programme piloted structured surveys before the actual data collection. Semi-structured interviews complemented the surveys, providing nuanced insights into the experiences, perceptions and livelihoods of communities closely connected to marine ecosystems.



Snapshot :

- **150** surveys completed with fishermen.
- **30** surveys completed with tourist operators and divers.
- **30** Semi-structured interviews conducted in South Goa. These interviews were conducted around how people's subjective experience of fishing and allied occupations, relationship with the administration, social ties etc.
- **21** interviews completed on **Minicoy island** (Phase 1)
- **Thematic analysis** of Phase 1 data completed
- On-ground Partner: **Research and Education for Environmental Education Foundation (REEF)**

UNDERSTANDING THE HUMAN LANDSCAPE IN 2025-26

LISTENING TO ISLAND COMMUNITIES IN LAKSHADWEEP

Island ecosystems present unique social and ecological contexts.

During 2025–26, the programme expanded its behavioural research to Minicoy Island through field team training, interviews and qualitative research. Thematic analysis of data collected across Lakshadweep provided insights into how island communities relate to their environment.

Snapshot

- **84** interviews completed across **all inhabited islands** (Phase 1)
- **21** interviews completed on **Minicoy island** (Phase 1)
- **Thematic analysis** of Phase 1 data completed
- On-ground Partner: **Research and Education for Environmental Education Foundation (REEF)**



A NEW LENS: THE EYE TRACKER IN HUNSUR

Not all behavioural research begins with questions. Sometimes it begins with where people look.

During 2025–26, the programme piloted eye-tracking technology to better understand how people perceive wildlife. An eye tracker records where a person looks, how long (s)he remains focused and their visual sequence of observations, for insights into human decision-making and perception.

Working with its on-ground partners, the programme undertook a project to understand how people detect snakes in natural settings. The team designed an experimental study to understand the differences in search and detection of snakes by those who are experts at snake detection versus lay people in the landscape. Field trials with the eye tracker were conducted in the Konkan before piloting the experimental study in Hunsur, Karnataka.

By the end of this year, the experimental trials are expected to be concluded.

- First-time application of eye-tracking to snake detection training for lay people aimed at reducing accidental encounters, building on insights using the expert–novice paradigm
- Field trial conducted in the Konkan (July 2025)
- Experimental trial conducted in Hunsur (November 2025)
- Ethics committee approval obtained for the behavioural experiment
- On-ground Partners: ***The Liana Trust, Humane World for Animals***

SPOTLIGHT STORY

Reading the Human Side of the Konkan Sadas

The Konkan Sadas are among India's most distinctive lateritic landscapes. While their plateaus, seasonal pools and wildflowers reveal their ecological story, the programme sought to understand the people who live alongside them.

During 2025–26, the CBS Programme undertook one of its largest behavioural studies, spanning all talukas in Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts. Customised household surveys and psychometric instruments were used to collect psychological and socio-economic data at scale. An item analysis of every instrument was carried out to ensure measurement reliability. A CBS-trained field team implemented this study, exploring how people experience, value and relate to their natural surroundings.

The first phase concluded with data collection and reporting of findings. This evidence offers a broader understanding of community behaviour, shaping locally relevant conservation interventions.

The Konkan Sadas tell more than an ecological story. Understanding the people living within this landscape is helping build a more complete foundation for its conservation.

WHY THIS STUDY STANDS OUT

Among the largest comprehensive psychological and socio-economic datasets assembled for the Konkan landscape. (To the team's knowledge)

Seven psychometric instruments developed to measure different dimensions of human–nature relationships.

A dedicated hamlet-level survey complemented household surveys, generating information for a more comprehensive understanding of the landscape.

The Study at a Glance:

- 185 villages covered
- 495 hamlet-level surveys
- 7,000+ individual surveys completed
- On-ground Partner: Sahyadri Nisarg Mitra

Seven Validated Psychometric Instruments : (measuring dimensions of Human-Nature relationships)

- Conception of Conservation
- Environmental Injustice
- Conservation Identity
- Experience of Living with Nature
- Conservation Motivation
- Gratitude towards Nature
- Place Attachment (to the Konkan)

Parameters Measured:

- Culture
- Personality
- Urban Aspirations
- Values
- Life Satisfaction
- Justice
- Hope

Socio-economic variables:

- Income
- Expenditure
- Crop depredation and compensation
- Water
- Land ownership
- Agricultural data



MILESTONES THAT SHAPED 2025–26

6391

ON-GROUND SURVEYS COMPLETED

Behavioural research conducted across the Terai landscape, including Dudhwa, Pilibhit and Katarniaghat, covering nearly 300 variables.

7069

PARTICIPANTS SURVEYED

On-ground survey data collected across Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts on nearly 300 behavioural indicators.

7

PSYCHOMETRIC TOOLS

Developed to study human-nature relationships in Konkan Sadas.

TO BE CONTINUED... FY 2026–27

This year, the programme focused on building one of its largest behavioural evidence bases across terrestrial and marine landscapes. The upcoming year will focus on translating these insights into locally rooted conservation interventions and expanding the application of behavioural science across research, policy and practice.

TURNING EVIDENCE INTO ACTION

Analysing behavioural datasets from the Konkan, the Terai landscape and marine ecosystems to design and implement conservation interventions informed by local contexts and realities.

REFINING BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE METHODS

Developing rapid and scalable approaches for behavioural data collection, while refining research methodologies to strengthen evidence-based conservation.

EXPANDING EYE-TRACKING RESEARCH

Building on the pilot study to explore how eye-tracking can further the understanding of human responses to wildlife and conservation challenges.

BRINGING BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE INTO POLICY

Deepen engagement with institutions, experts and collaborators through shared platforms and conversations.

GROWING RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

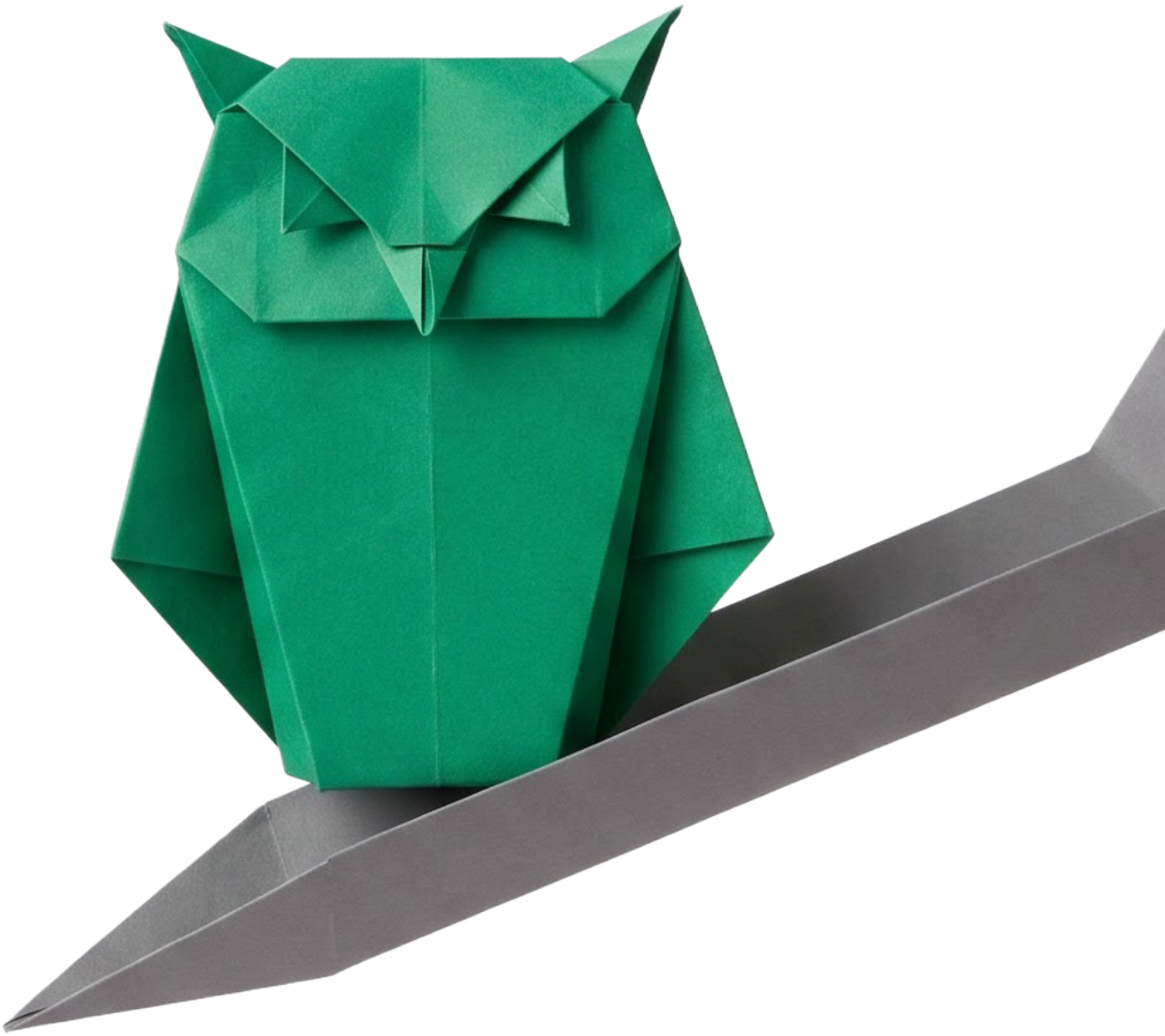
Continuing collaborations with partners, researchers and field teams to strengthen behavioural science capacity and expand its application across conservation landscapes.

People and their perspectives are part of every conservation story. Our work in understanding them continues to build a stronger foundation for what comes next.

THE HABITATS TRUST

EXPANDING THE REACH

Technology for Conservation Programme 2025–26: Turning Insights into Action



THAT SOLUTION

TECHNOLOGY FOR CONSERVATION PROGRAMME 2025–26

Turning Insights into Action

There is only so far a diver can go.

At around 30 metres, conventional SCUBA surveys must turn back.

Beyond that lies another world — India's mesophotic reefs — that are among its least explored marine ecosystems. Could these deeper reefs be less affected by warming seas? How do they compare with reefs closer to the surface? Are they changing in ways we are yet to understand? What role might they play in the future of coral ecosystems?

Many such questions remain unanswered because these reefs lie beyond the reach of traditional surveys. No one can protect what they cannot study and understand.

And this challenge extends far beyond the ocean. In the rainforests of Northeast India, a Hoolock Gibbon is often heard before it is seen — its call one of the few reliable ways to detect it. Across India's grasslands, an Indian Grey Wolf may appear in only a handful of the millions of images captured by camera-traps. From inaccessible habitats and elusive species to vast volumes of ecological data, conservation increasingly depends on technology to observe, analyse, and interpret nature.

The Habitats Trust's Technology for Conservation (TfC) Programme is helping make this possible by developing and adapting technologies for real-world conservation challenges.

In 2025–26, the programme continued advancing applied conservation research by helping conservation practitioners and researchers overcome monitoring challenges and strengthen the evidence needed for conservation action.

Equally important, the programme worked to democratise conservation technology by making tools, expertise, and analytical workflows more accessible through collaboration and training. This enabled a wider community of researchers and conservation practitioners to apply them across India's diverse landscapes.

THE PROGRAMME

THT's Technology for Conservation (TfC) vertical brings together ecology, engineering, computing, and data science to develop practical technologies that improve biodiversity monitoring, ecological analysis and conservation decision-making.

Its work centres on three priorities:

- **Improving ecological data collection** in challenging or lesser-known habitats through technologies such as bioacoustics, camera-trapping, drones, and underwater surveys.
- **Simplifying ecological data analysis** by developing tools and workflows that enable researchers to process large datasets more efficiently and extract meaningful insights.
- **Adapting and refining technologies** from allied fields to create practical, field-ready solutions for conservation.

Alongside technology development, the programme strengthens capacity through collaborations, training, and accessible tools, enabling researchers and conservation practitioners to adopt emerging technologies more effectively and generate stronger evidence for informed conservation action.

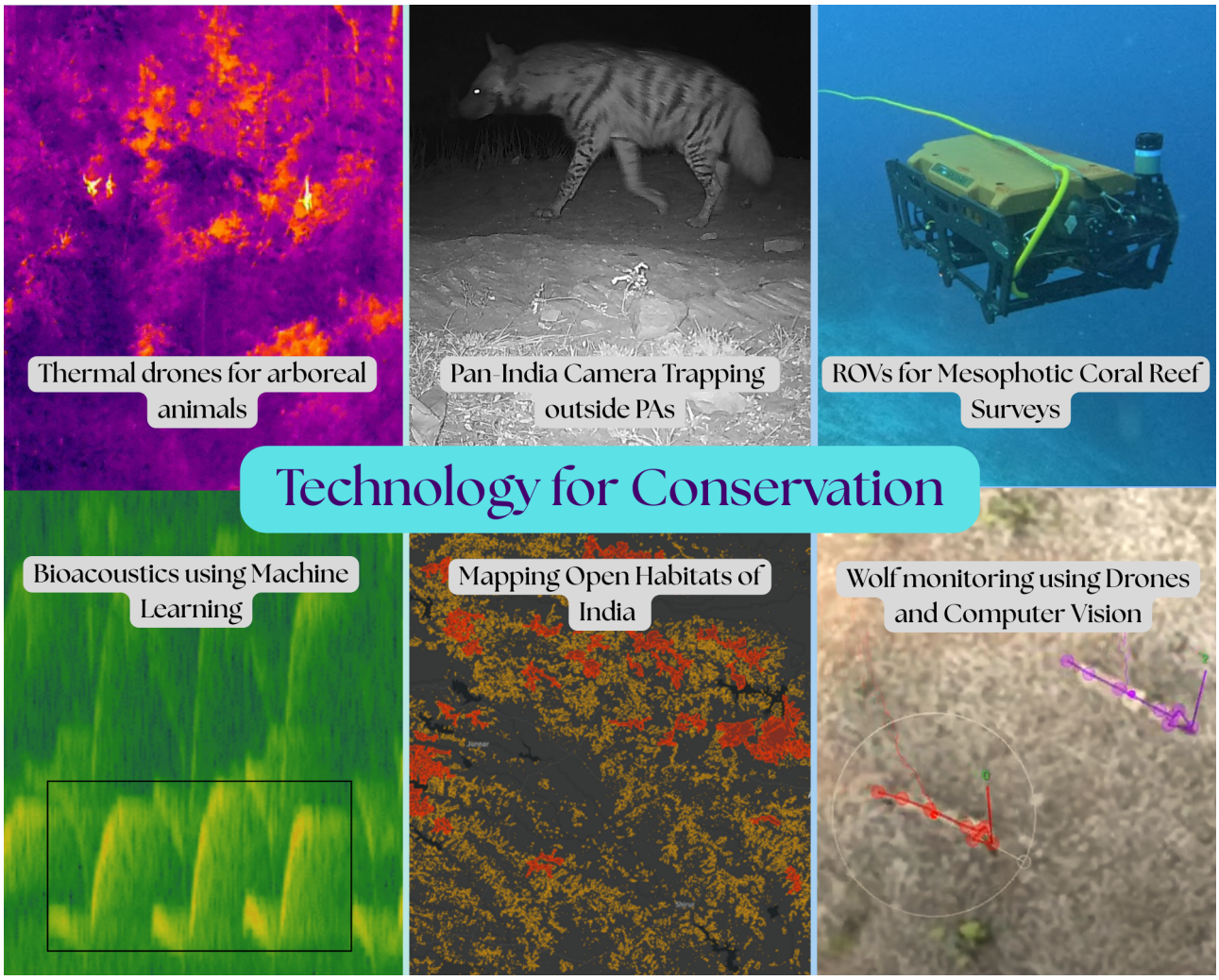
THE PEOPLE

Hundreds of square kilometres. Thousands of hours of sound. Lakhs of images.
Enabling conservation through technology.

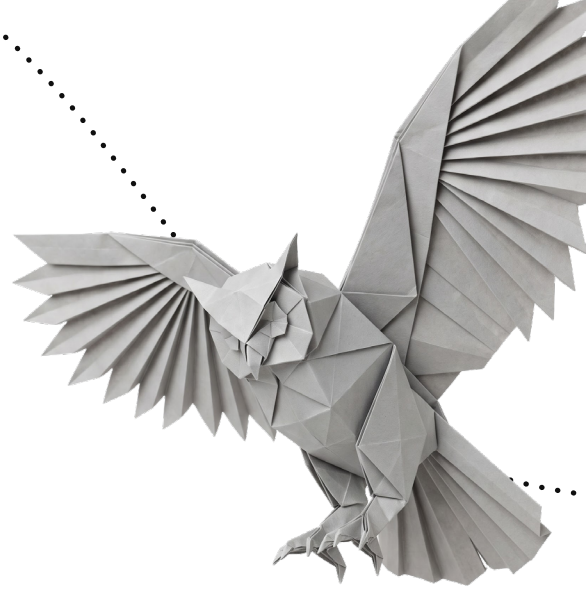
Core Team: Santhosh S L (Programme Lead) | Abigith Baby (Deputy Manager) | Kishore Panaganti (Associate Manager)

Consultants: Sharat Agarwal (HabiDATA) | Makesh Chandrasekaran (SonicWild and Chatak) | M D Madhusudan (ONE map) | Pradeep Koulgi (ONE map) | Dinesh Khate (Camera-trapping in Nagpur)

Interns: Arnav Aditya | Abhyudaya Vasisht | Akash Ram



TECHNOLOGY IN ACTION THROUGH 2025–26



From rainforest canopies and grasslands to deep reefs and vast camera-trap networks, the TfC Programme worked across four complementary dimensions: listening, observing, analysing, and enabling.

Together, they strengthened the knowledge and evidence needed to better understand nature and support informed conservation. The pages that follow reflect these four dimensions, each addressing a different conservation challenge while contributing to the same goal of enabling more effective conservation action.

01 | LISTENING TO THE WILD

Bioacoustics opens a window into the wild — letting us study wildlife and habitats through soundscapes, the combined biotic and abiotic sounds of a landscape. From individual calls to habitat-scale acoustic patterns, this approach helps detect wildlife, understand behaviour, and support landscape-level conservation.

HOOLOCK GIBBON ACOUSTIC CLASSIFIERS

To improve the monitoring of Hoolock Gibbons in Northeast India, the programme partnered with Conservation Initiatives (CI) to develop acoustic tools that use artificial intelligence (AI) to automate the detection of gibbon calls from thousands of hours of audio. The team also tested ways to decipher these calls to understand individual identity.

- **Species Detection:** Developed a fine-tuned classifier and packaged it into an easy-to-use tool that reduced human effort and helped map Hoolock Gibbon presence to support landscape-level conservation.
- **Individual Identification:** Hand-annotated hundreds of “duet” recordings to see if individual gibbon groups could be identified by unique vocal signatures. A state-of-the-art Acoustic Individual Identification (AIID) pipeline was used to quantify individuality in the gibbon calls, but revealed no distinct vocal signatures — prompting a future pivot to combined audio-visual tracking.

SONICWILD

Traditional Autonomous Recording Units (ARUs) used for acoustic monitoring do not indicate the direction of a sound source, and existing approaches to localise sound are bulky. The team is developing SonicWild, a fully embedded, compact hardware device, currently being tested in the field.

Progress so far:

- Developed the initial prototype using an off-the-shelf microphone array integrated with a Raspberry Pi module.
- Successfully localised various sound sources and can visualise up to 10 active sources at a time, using an intuitive, map-based 3D visualiser, on either live or archived audio.
- Achieved highly accurate direction-tracking between 50 and 100 metres, though distance estimation requires further refinement.



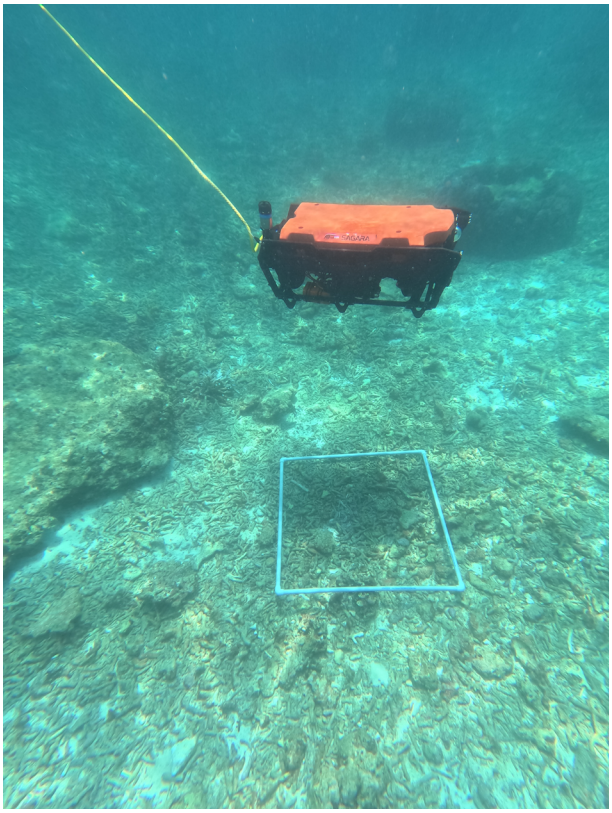
02 | SEEING THE UNSEEN

Advancement in conservation technologies is helping teams survey ecosystems that were once challenging to observe.

EXPLORING MESOPHOTIC REEFS WITH ROVS

Standard SCUBA diving limits reef monitoring to 30 metres. Partnering with REEF and IROV Technologies, the team deployed Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs) to explore Lakshadweep's deep "twilight zone" reefs.

- Conducted 15 transects and captured photo-quadrats at regular intervals, across 10 sites around the islands of Androt, Kalpeni, and Amini, at depths down to 150 metres — essentially, following fixed survey routes and photographing the seabed at regular intervals to document what was found.
- Standardised sub-sea survey methods, including successful belt transect trials with photo-quadrats, and used updated ROV payloads with front-facing stereo cameras for virtual or synthesised measurements.
- Built a custom software tool to overlay virtual grids on photo-quadrat images, enabling downstream analysis in Coral Point Count (CPC) software.





LARGE-SCALE SEMI-SYSTEMATIC CAMERA-TRAPPING

Wildlife monitoring equipment, including camera-traps, is a major financial barrier for local conservation organisations, individuals, and practitioners. THT addressed this by continuing a pan-India camera-trap leasing model, launched to provide easier access to equipment, build partner capacity, and enable technology-supported data processing for habitats outside the Protected Area Network (PAN).

- Covered 3,524 sq. km across 10 sites in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Nagaland, and West Bengal, generating over 18 lakh images.
- Worked with key collaborators across these sites: Sahjeevan, The Grasslands Trust (TGT), Policy Advocacy Research Centre (PARC), Kenneth Anderson Nature Society (KANS), IBAPWO (International Border Area Peoples' Welfare Organisation), WINGS (Wildlife Information and Nature Guide Society), and Maharashtra Forest Department.
- Documented important Indian Pangolin records alongside records of wolves and hyenas across 340 sq. km of Maharashtra's grasslands (with TGT).
- Captured the first photographic records of species such as the Honey Badger, Red-morphed Porcupine, and Asiatic Wildcat, among many others, during surveys across India.
- Achieved highly accurate direction-tracking between 50 and 100 metres, though distance estimation requires further refinement.
- Supported the sixth cycle of the All-India Tiger Estimation (AITE 2026) by training the Nagpur Forest Division in camera-trap surveys and assisting with deployment plans.

03 | TURNING DATA INTO INSIGHTS

The rapid expansion of field monitoring generates large camera-trap image and video datasets, making manual classification time-intensive and resource-demanding. To bridge this gap, the programme develops intelligent tools and frameworks that ease data analyses and speed up ecological inferences.

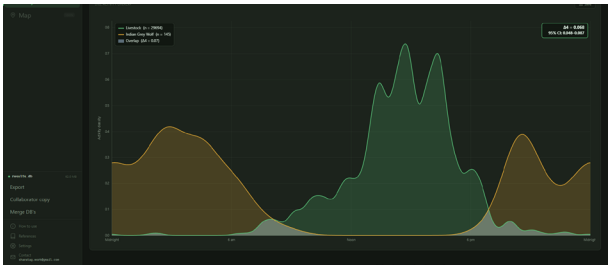
HABIDATA | HABITAT-CENTRIC DATA ACQUISITION, TRANSFORMATION, AND ANALYTICS

TfC engineered an offline, AI-driven, human-in-the-loop desktop application (for Mac and Windows) to manage, analyse, and organise massive camera-trap image and video datasets.

The tool:

- Processes up to 20 images per second and refines the global MegaDetector model for Indian conditions, achieving 93% accuracy across 9 lakh images from three different sites.
- Includes a livestock classification feature, drastically reducing the manual effort researchers spend separating wild species from domestic cattle.
- Comes integrated with popular camera-trap analyses (Relative Abundance Index, overlap, diversity, etc.) and built-in statistical tools, encouraging users to extract ecological inferences rather than simply colle

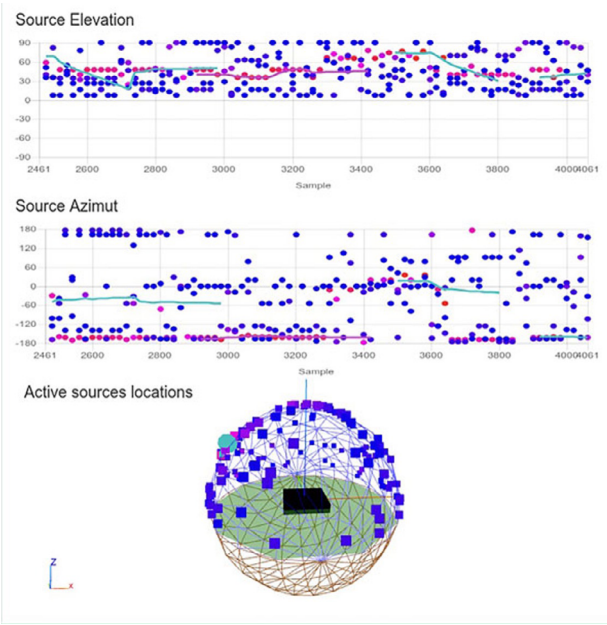






CHATAK | ACOUSTIC DATA ANALYSIS TOOL

- To ease the burden of audio analysis, TfC worked on developing an offline software platform in 2025–26. The platform:
- Aims to allow researchers to organise data across multiple field sites and process large acoustic datasets locally without needing internet access.
- Automates sound detection, segmentation, and clustering.
- Features interactive visual dashboards and spectrograms, enabling researchers to manually annotate data and eventually develop custom species classifiers.
- Beyond the above tools, TfC also applies technology at scale within dedicated field programmes by turning multi-source data into actionable conservation insight for specific species and landscapes.



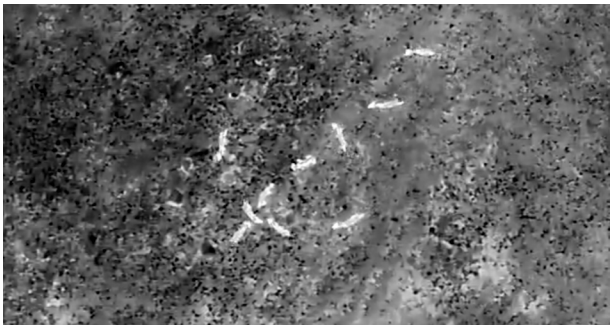
OPEN NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS | MAPPING AND MONITORING

Open Natural Ecosystems (ONEs), often misclassified as wastelands, have long been among the most neglected habitats in Indian conservation.

The Indian Grey Wolf is a key predator inhabiting these ecosystems and faces growing threats but remains largely overlooked in mainstream conservation efforts. Surviving largely outside protected areas, these wolves face severe risks from prey depletion, feral dogs, and retaliatory killings — making the conservation of remaining ONEs critical. Mapping their presence, and the broader health of the grasslands they inhabit, is essential to informing where and how conservation action is needed.

In this regard, THT's TfC Programme supported the development of an India-specific Open Natural Ecosystems (ONE) map, which assists in understanding their extent. Additionally, working with TGT, TfC uses integrated, multi-scale monitoring and technology to establish wolf presence across 10 districts in Western and Central Maharashtra, while driving community-based conservation efforts in four key districts.

- Conducted camera-trapping surveys, processed over 11 lakh images, completed high-resolution drone mapping of denning sites and surrounding habitats, tested drone-based surveys of ungulates, and collected targeted audio-visual data from wolf breeding sites across Pune, Ahilyanagar, Satara, and Solapur.
- Continued building a multi-scale understanding of wolf habitats by initiating land ownership assessments across study areas using available records and field validation.
- Strengthened community-based monitoring by onboarding 54 local wildlife watchers and conducting six Forest Department training programmes, engaging 250 participants to support long-term conservation efforts.



TRACKING WOLVES WITH AI

At first glance, one Indian Grey Wolf may look much like another. Yet hidden in the patterns of fur along its back are subtle markings that make each animal unique.

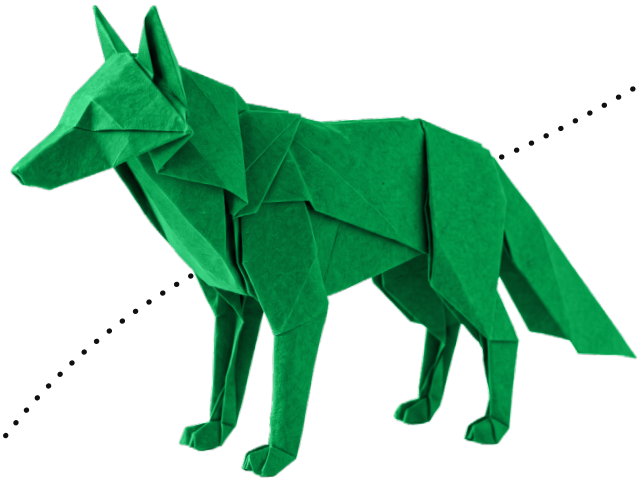
TfC, in collaboration with TGT and a researcher from the Max Planck Institute, explored whether AI could recognise these differences from drone photographs. The result: an AI-powered model that successfully identified individual wolves within a pack by their dorsal fur patterns — paving the way for wolves to be identified without capturing, collaring, or disturbing them.

Using individual identification, this approach could help reveal pack structure, movement, and long-term population trends for a species that ranges across vast, largely unprotected landscapes.

The technology is still at an early stage, successfully tested on two packs so far, with plans to expand testing to more packs in the coming years.

Could AI become a new ally for India's wildlife?





04 | WIDENING THE REACH

Technology creates the greatest impact when widely shared and adopted. Beyond developing new tech, the programme worked on outreach and building capacity by training researchers, convening experts, and strengthening the broader conservation-tech ecosystem.

- **Advanced Bioacoustics Training:** Supported the Advanced Acoustics Workshop at Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Tirupati, in collaboration with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, bringing together 20 participants for training in bioacoustics.
- **Conceptualising a National Centre:** Participated in a six-hour hybrid convening at IISER Tirupati that brought together researchers, conservationists, NGOs, and funders to conceptualise a Bioacoustics Centre for India, inspired by Cornell's successful models.
- **WWF Conservation Catalyst Session:** Delivered a dedicated Technology for Conservation session in Panchgani, introducing emerging technologies and their field applications to approximately 25 early-career conservationists.



SPOTLIGHT STORY

From the Field to the Global Stage

THT's TfC Programme showcased its innovations at the first-ever International Conservation Technology Conference (ICTC), held from 16 to 20 February 2026, in Lima, Peru. The event brought together roughly 600 participants from 60 countries, connecting THT's work with a global community of researchers, technologists, and conservation practitioners.

The programme had a strong presence throughout the conference, delivering four lightning talks and one innovation pitch, participating in a plenary session, and serving as a reviewer for the Dolphin Tank (a smaller-format Shark Tank contest under the Nature Intelligence Challenge by Conservation X Labs).

Among the technologies presented, SonicWild — the programme's sound-localisation hardware and visualiser — emerged as a standout innovation. It generated significant interest from participants, becoming one of the conference's most sought-after sessions on the event application. Researchers and practitioners from across the world expressed interest in testing the technology in their own landscapes, recognising its potential to advance wildlife acoustic monitoring.

The conference also created opportunities to share other technologies developed under the programme, leading to valuable discussions exploring their application in diverse conservation contexts.

As an event partner, THT hosted a stall and was prominently featured across the conference venue, including on main screens and backdrops. More than a showcase, ICTC reinforced the programme's growing role in advancing practical conservation technologies and contributing to global conversations on innovation for biodiversity conservation.

ICTC reaffirmed THT's vision: impact scales through people, not just tools. It is not what we build, but how far it travels when democratised, shared, and applied.

MILESTONES THAT SHAPED 2025–26

1ST

COMPACT SOUND-LOCALISATION PROTOTYPE DEVELOPED

SonicWild successfully localised multiple sound sources simultaneously using a Raspberry Pi-based microphone array and intuitive map-based visualisation.

15

DEEP-REEF TRANSECTS COMPLETED

Across 10 study areas in the Lakshadweep islands, refining survey methods for India's mesophotic reefs at depths of up to 150 metres.

11 LAKH+

IMAGES ANALYSED

by HabiDATA — an indigenously developed, fully integrated wildlife image analysis suite featuring a fine-tuned MegaDetector optimised for Indian field scenarios, including dedicated livestock classification.

TO BE CONTINUED...
FY 2026–27

In 2025–26, the programme focused on developing the hardware, software, and AI models needed to monitor ecosystems at scale. The coming year will focus on refining these tools, further democratising them with the wider community, and generating the knowledge needed for better conservation decisions.

STANDARDISING MESOPHOTIC MARINE SURVEYS

Post-processing and analysing data collected through transect and quadrat surveys, extracting inferences, and drafting a methods paper on the standardisation of survey methods.

ADVANCING GIBBON ACOUSTICS

Further exploring deep-learning methods for individual identification in gibbon vocalisations, integrating audio-visual data to address overlapping vocalisations and understand call variation, and publishing the outcomes and insights with partner organisations.

REFINING SONICWILD AND ITS FIELD READINESS

Developing a field-ready version of SonicWild with weatherproofing and an ergonomic form factor for long-term deployments, alongside validation in different outdoor scenarios. The team will stabilise user interfaces and source-tracking algorithms, integrate species classifiers, and improve outputs for downstream analysis.

SCALING PAN-INDIA CAMERA-TRAPPING

Completing data analysis and inference extraction across sites, understanding partner data pipelines and approaches, extending surveys to newer sites, and working with partners to secure potential patches within sampled landscapes.

ADVANCING SAVANNAH AND WOLF CONSERVATION

Testing the individual wolf-identification model across other packs, completing camera-trap analyses, extracting ungulate estimates from drone transects, and drafting a framework for savannah monitoring and conservation.

OPEN-SOURCING AI AND DATA PIPELINES

Preparing clean, structured Indian camera-trap and audio datasets for public release and distributing trained models for community adoption and benchmarking. Efforts will focus on improving data pipelines and developing small, robust models tailored to local ecosystems and democratising them through fully offline HabiDATA and Chatak tools.

As technology evolves, our work continues to expand its reach — exploring the unknown, studying the elusive, generating insights, and strengthening capacities — all to enable effective conservation. From insights to action.



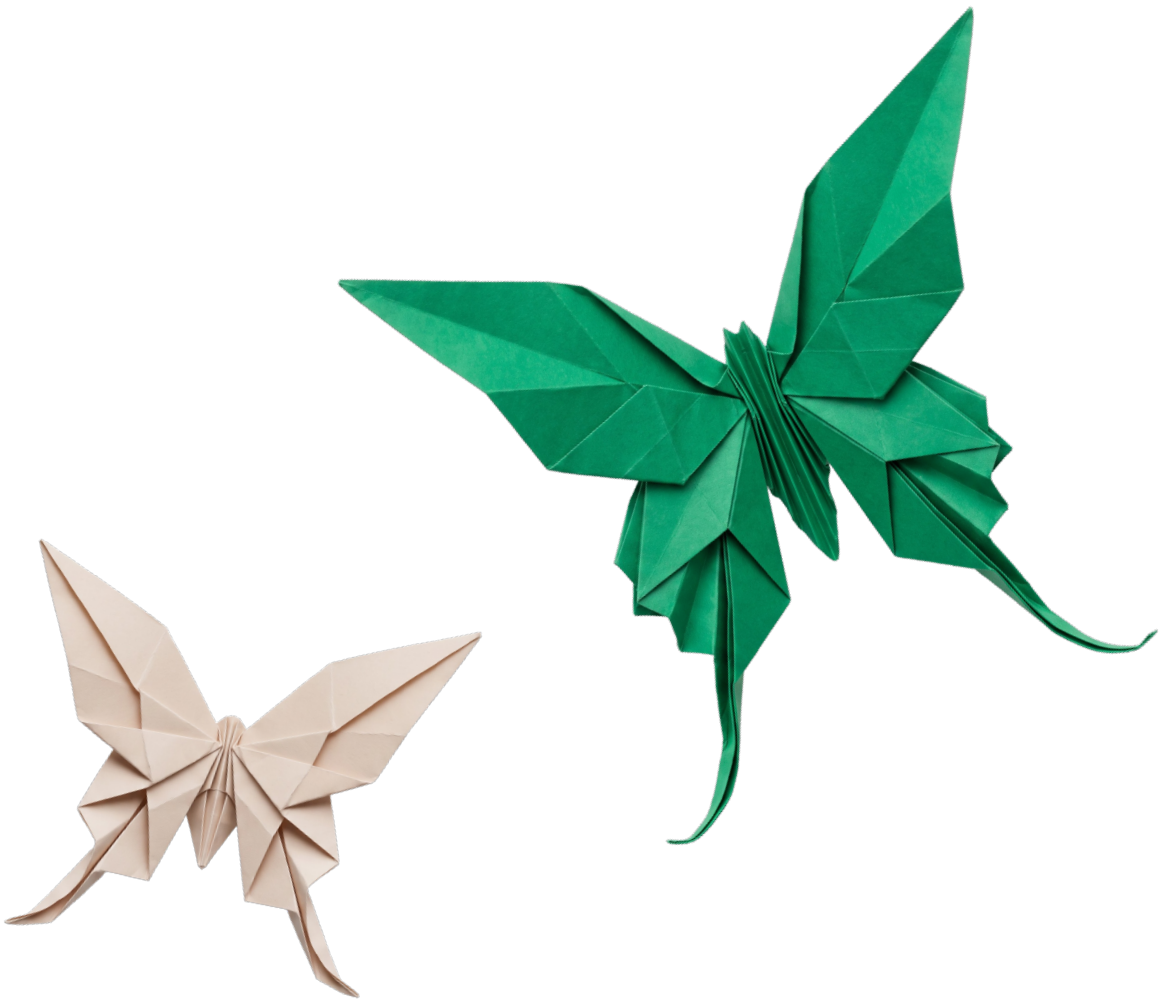




THE HABITATS TRUST

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

Education & Awareness Programme 2025–26: From Curiosity to Conservation



THAT SOLUTION

EDUCATION & AWARENESS PROGRAMME 2025–26

From Curiosity to Conservation

It starts as most things do — with simple questions.

"Why are the leaves of this tree turning yellow while the ones on the tree beside it are still green?" asks a curious student during a nature walk at Shiv Nadar School.

"Why do some ecosystems recover while others decline?" ask conservation practitioners, looking for the same kind of fundamental understanding.

In Northeast India, a simple biodiversity game sparks another question:

"How well do we really know the plants and animals we live alongside?"

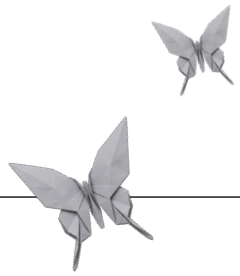
Most conservation stories begin this way, with curiosity, and a question. Questions lead to understanding. Understanding becomes awareness. And awareness, once shared, inspires action, sending ripples far beyond where they began.

Across 2025–26, The Habitats Trust's Education & Awareness Programme focused on creating these ripples — building environmental awareness, strengthening conservation capacity, and connecting people through learning.

THE PROGRAMME

Conservation is sustained through learning. From classrooms and research institutions to field practitioners and local communities, meaningful conservation depends on people having the knowledge and skills to understand, care for, and protect the natural world. Yet much of this knowledge remains confined to research papers, specialist circles, or isolated initiatives, leaving many without the means to turn awareness into action.

The Education & Awareness Programme works to bridge this gap by making conservation learning more accessible, practical, and collaborative. Through schools, practitioner training, fellowships, and partnerships, it is building a growing community of teachers, students, researchers, practitioners, and local leaders who can contribute to conservation in their own way.



THE PEOPLE

Hundreds of learners. Transformative learning journeys. Lasting change.
Championing conservation through education and awareness:

Rutuja Dhamale (Programme Lead)

Aashish Gokhale (Senior Executive)

HOW THE RIPPLE TRAVELLED IN 2025–26

STARTING WITH TEACHERS

Every ripple starts somewhere. In 2025–26, many of ours began with those who shape everyday learning, teachers.

Across three Shiv Nadar School campuses, the programme built the capacity of teachers to weave nature into the existing curriculum, making environmental learning part of everyday lessons rather than a separate subject.

During the year, the Nature Integration Curriculum for the Early Years (EY) and Primary Years (PY) was completed and delivered, while the Middle Years (MY) curriculum was further strengthened through teacher feedback.

By starting with teachers, the programme ensured that the ripple could reach every child they taught, year after year.

Partner
Shiv Nadar School

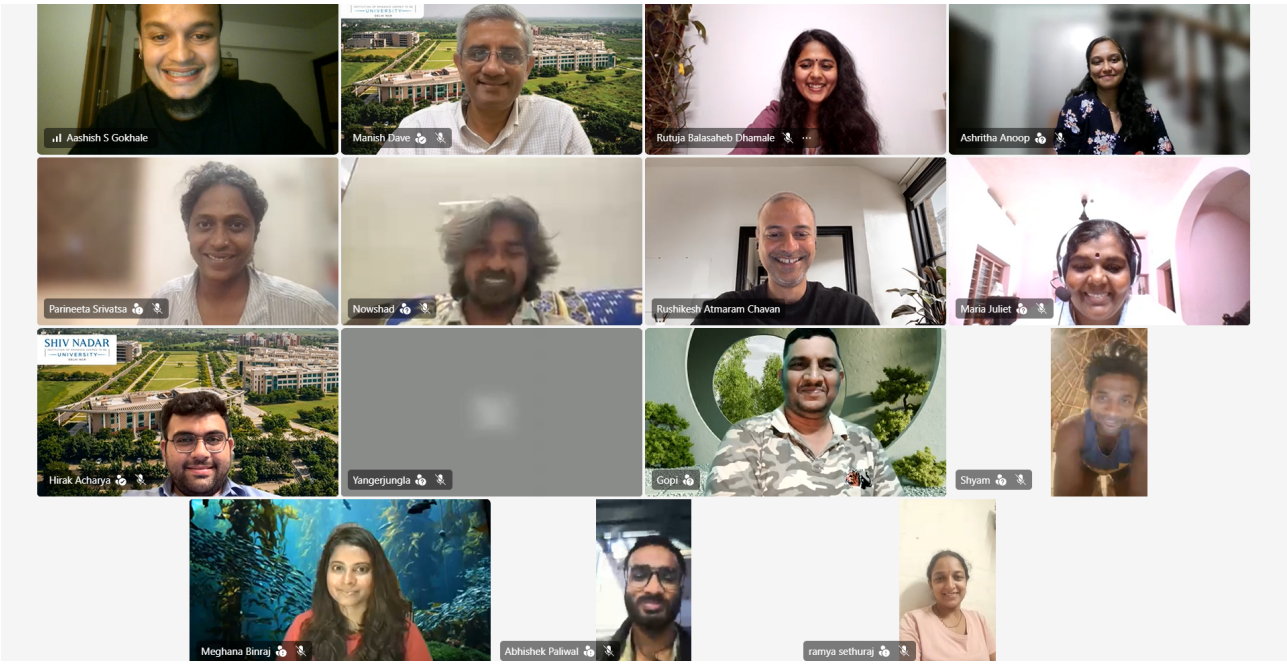
Campuses
Noida • Gurugram • Faridabad

Focus
Teacher capacity building (Grades 1–8)

Approach
Nature woven into existing curriculum, not taught separately

Outcome

Children develop curiosity, environmental awareness, and a deeper connection with the natural world.



STRENGTHENING CONSERVATION PRACTICE

Protecting nature requires more than scientific knowledge. It demands communication, leadership, and the ability to work across disciplines.

To strengthen these capabilities, THT partnered with the Academy of Continuing Education to launch the Conservation Practitioners Course — an interdisciplinary programme for professionals working in conservation.

The inaugural cohort brought together 16 practitioners from across India. They came from diverse professional backgrounds, including research, field implementation, education, conservation communication, policy, as well as the Forest Department. Their academic backgrounds spanned zoology, environmental science, engineering, biotechnology, law, marine science, and information technology.

More than a certificate, the programme created a community of practitioners who continue to exchange ideas, experiences, and solutions long after the course concluded.

Partner
Academy of Continuing Education

Participants
16 practitioners from across India
(Nagaland • Lakshadweep • Karnataka • Kerala • Tamil Nadu • Maharashtra • Uttar Pradesh • Dadra & Nagar Haveli)

Focus
Building interdisciplinary conservation skills for working professionals.

Successfully Certified
10 participants (3 graduated with distinction)

Seed Grants Awarded
₹3 lakh each to 6 participants for on-ground conservation ideas

Outcome
A growing community of conservation practitioners with stronger skills, wider perspectives, and lasting professional connections.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

Tomorrow's conservation begins with today's research.

Through the **THT × NCBS Fellowship Programme**, three early-career researchers received support to pursue applied research addressing real conservation challenges across India.

Their projects were:

- Understanding the Fate of Arid-specialist Birds Shaped by Irrigation Infrastructure and Associated Agriculture in the Thar Desert. **(Vijayaditya Singh Rathore)**
- Evolving Human–Elephant Relationships and Synurbisation of a Recolonising Wild Elephant Herd in an Agricultural Landscape in Northern Andhra Pradesh. **(Anupindi Sri Lakshmana Murthy)**
- Golden Jackals in an Urban Mangrove Ecosystem and their Interactions with Free-ranging Dogs **(Tanvi Sharad Dhuri)**

Each project adds to a growing understanding of the complex relationships between people, wildlife, and changing landscapes.

Partner
National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Bengaluru

Student Fellowships Supported
3

Focus
Applied conservation research

Research Landscapes
Thar Desert • Northern Andhra Pradesh • Urban Mangroves

Research Themes
Bird conservation • Human–wildlife coexistence • Urban ecology

Outcome
Building knowledge for future conservation action.

LEARNING TOGETHER



Knowledge grows when it is shared.

Through 2025–26, THT supported **four national conservation conferences**, which created opportunities for students, researchers, practitioners, and experts to exchange ideas, present new research, and build stronger professional networks.

These included:

- **IRALE-India —** Advancing landscape ecology across Central India.
- **Students Conference on Conservation Science (SCCS Bengaluru) —** Connecting emerging researchers with experienced practitioners.
- **Indian Wildlife Ecologists Conference —** Strengthening India's wildlife research community.
- **International Zoo and Wildlife Health Conference - India Chapter** — Promoting One Health approaches linking wildlife, ecosystems, and human well-being.

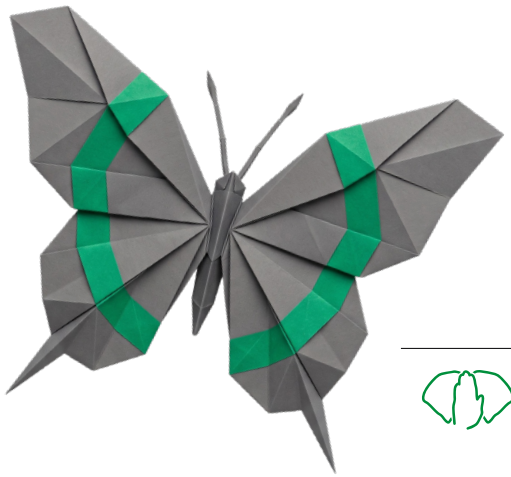
Together, these conferences helped strengthen collaboration across India's conservation community.

Conferences Supported
4

Participants
Students • Researchers • Practitioners • Subject Experts

Purpose
Knowledge exchange, collaboration, and professional networking

Outcome
Stronger networks and greater collaboration across India's conservation community.



SPREADING THROUGH PLAY

Sometimes, the easiest way to start a conversation about nature is through play.

Through its partnership with Canopy Collective, THT supported a fellowship course focused on creating and using biodiversity games — participatory, hands-on tools designed to help fellows spark conversations with communities about the plants and animals they live alongside. Participants learnt to design and facilitate interactive games, many inspired by familiar local games, to help communities recognise biodiversity and better understand ecological relationships.

A workshop in Tezpur became a key milestone. As the grantee shared:

"Your support in helping us conduct the workshop in Tezpur was invaluable. The experience and learnings from the workshop contributed significantly to our biodiversity games initiative... it was wonderful to see their creativity, collaboration and understanding of environmental issues come alive through these games."

The partnership also created a growing archive of biodiversity games and educational resources, free for educators and communities across India to adapt and use.

Partner
Canopy Collective

Region
Northeast India

Focus
Conservation Communication

Approach
Play-based learning to make ecological concepts engaging and accessible

Outcome
Open-access biodiversity games and educational resources



SPOTLIGHT STORY

Game-Changers in Northeast India: Youth Ambassadors for Conservation

The biodiversity games introduced earlier didn't just teach ecology — they surfaced a new kind of leadership.

What began as a creative experiment in learning design grew into something far larger. Working with Canopy Collective, THT's Education & Awareness Programme trained a network of conservation professionals to facilitate game-based learning in their own communities. But the real shift came through identifying and mentoring youth leaders as Nature Ambassadors — local voices equipped to carry conservation forward with an authenticity that no formal programme could replicate.

What changed was not just knowledge — it was ownership. Across Northeast India, communities gained more than tools; they gained advocates rooted in their own villages and landscapes, keeping conversations about nature alive long after the programme's formal activities had concluded. The ripple, once started, now moves on its own.

This momentum carries into FY 2026–27, as THT extends support to Canopy Collective's new Future Full of Forests Fellowship, a programme designed to equip young, community-based conservationists with training in project management, communication, and storytelling, thus deepening the youth ambassador network set in motion by this year's efforts.



MILESTONES THAT SHAPED 2025–26

10

PRACTITIONERS CERTIFIED

Ten participants completed the Conservation Practitioners Course, with three earning distinctions, strengthening conservation capacity across India.

INR 3L

SEED GRANT AWARDED

Six emerging conservationists received seed funding to transform ideas from the Conservation Practitioners Course into on-ground action.

3

STUDENT FELLOWSHIP

Three student research projects were supported through the THT × NCBS Fellowship Programme, advancing the next generation of conservation research.

TO BE CONTINUED... FY 2026–27

If 2025–26 was about sparking curiosity and strengthening conservation learning, the coming year will focus on helping those ripples travel further — deepening learning, expanding partnerships, and creating more opportunities for people to engage with nature.

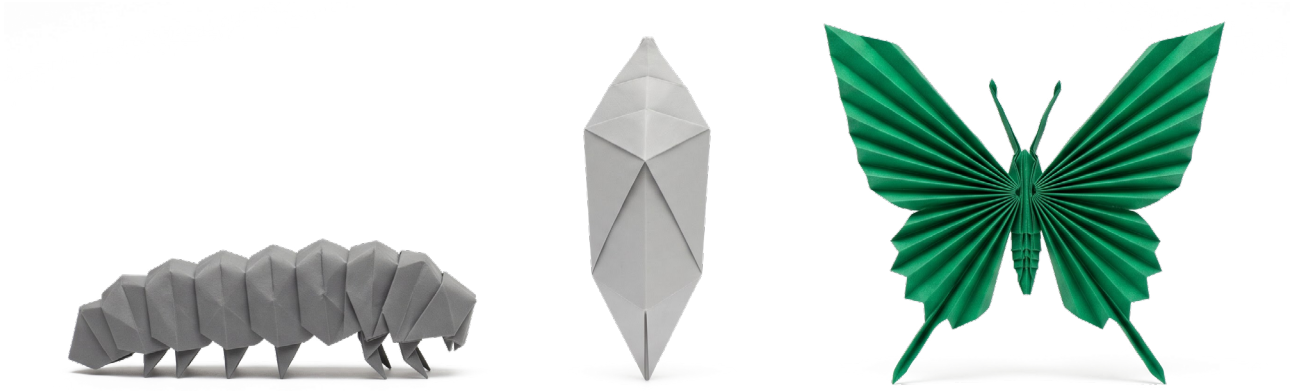
EXPANDING PRACTITIONER LEARNING
Continuing and expanding the Conservation Practitioners Course, with a larger cohort of up to 25 participants and revised modules to deepen learning.

DEEPENING NATURE CURRICULUM IN SCHOOLS
Delivering the Middle Years Nature Integration Curriculum at Shiv Nadar Schools, along with training workshops to support the Early Years, Primary Years, and Middle Years programmes.

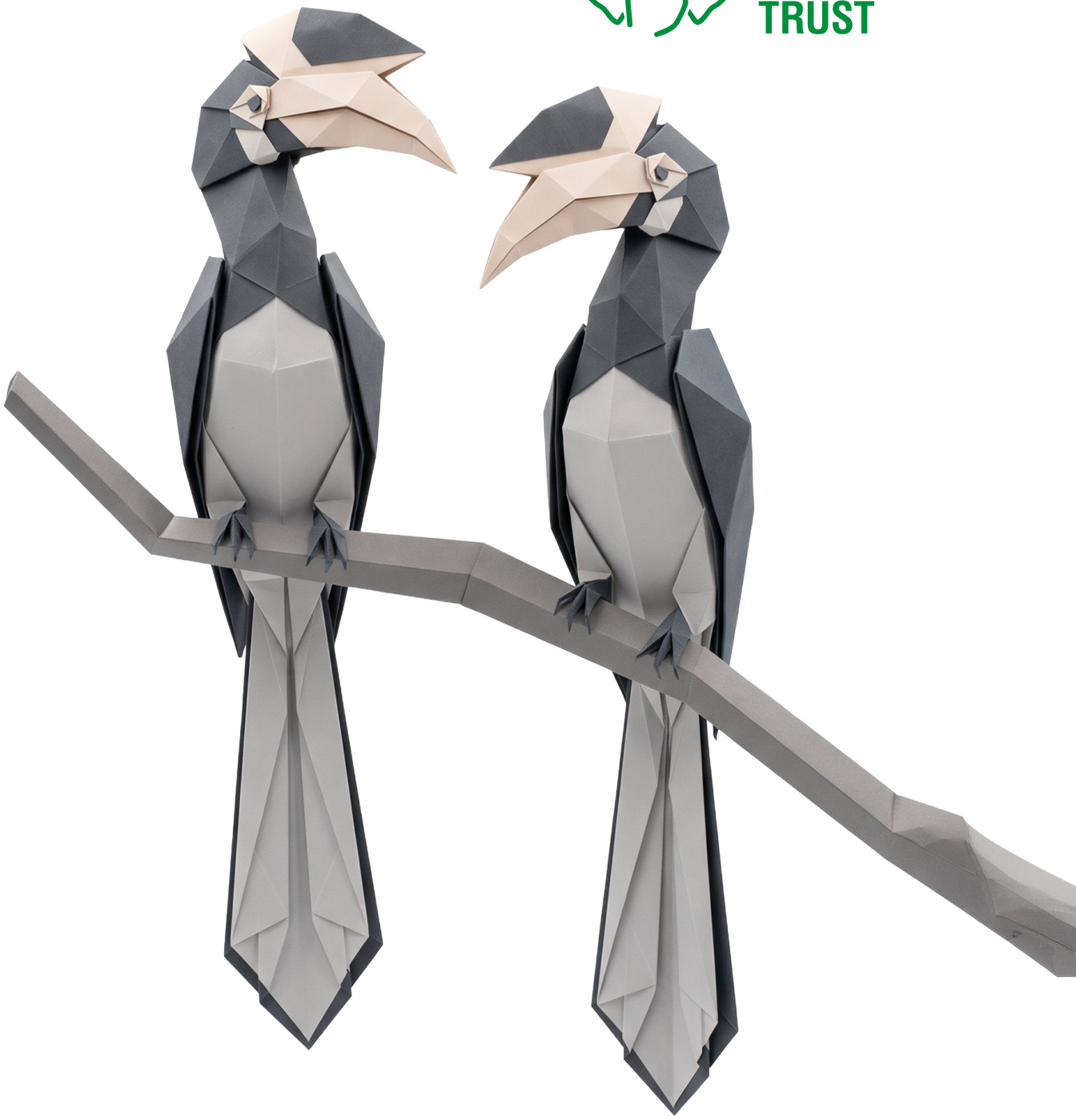
STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP
Providing strategic support to Canopy Collective's Future Full of Forests Fellowship to strengthen youth ambassador networks in Northeast India and enable community-led conservation initiatives.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH AND COLLABORATION
Continuing our research fellowship cycles, developing new research partnerships, and sustaining support for conservation conferences that bring together students, researchers, and practitioners.

The ripples continue to spread by reaching new people, places, and possibilities for conservation.



THE HABITATS TRUST



BEYOND THE FIELD

Communication & Branding Programme 2025–26: Shaping THT's Evolution

THAT SOLUTION

COMMUNICATION & BRANDING PROGRAMME 2025–26

Shaping THT's Evolution

WHO ARE WE? WHAT ARE WE BECOMING?

THT has long been recognised as a conservation organisation and philanthropic institution supporting initiatives with grants for conservation and awareness.

The organisation is now evolving with a broader vision — moving beyond being known only as a funder, to becoming nature-oriented problem solvers, using design-led thinking and collaborative action to improve India's ecological parameters that positively influence India's economy.

This evolution reflects an expanded role and capability, positioning THT as an innovative and solutions-driven partner that communicates not just what it supports, but what it solves.

For the Communication & Branding Programme, this transition meant rethinking how the organisation presents itself to different audiences across platforms. Beyond communicating individual projects and achievements, the focus shifted towards **strengthening THT's identity, narrative and visibility** — bringing greater coherence to how its programmes and partnerships are understood and connected through a shared vision.

2025–26 was therefore a year of laying foundations for greater consistency, stronger recognition and a clearer expression of THT's evolving role as a catalyst for conservation solutions.

THE PROGRAMME

Communication & Branding helps articulate THT's work and ideas, while translating science, field insights and technology into accessible stories. The team works across branding, films, media, digital storytelling, publications, campaigns and events — supporting both the organisation and its programmes.

The work moves between strategy and execution: from organisational positioning and designing publications to developing a campaign, engaging the media and creating experiences for partners and participants.

Across these different forms, the objective remains the same: **turning knowledge into engagement, and engagement into action.**

THE PEOPLE

Multiple platforms. Diverse conversations. One clear voice.

Strengthening THT's evolving identity through strategic storytelling, creativity and branding:

Kanak Angirish (Programme Lead)

Harshita Sharma (Branding)

Shriman Bhatt (Communications)

Manasa V. (Films)

A YEAR OF EVOLUTION

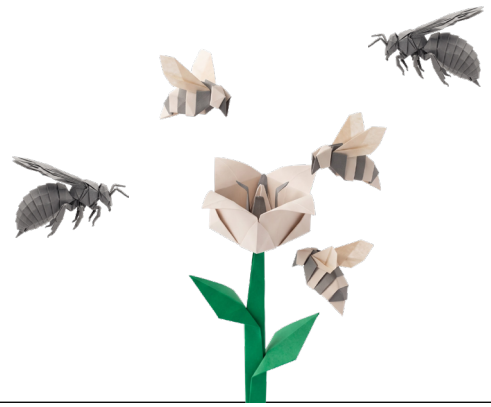
2025–26 was about building the foundation for influence, not just visibility. Three areas of evolution defined the team's work.

01 ALIGNING IDENTITY

Until now, the Communication & Branding team's role centred primarily on supporting individual programmes and telling their stories. In 2025–26, that shifted.

One of the year's most significant strategic initiatives for the Communication & Branding team was working with Hari & Das on an organisation-wide brand exercise — moving the team from just supporting programmes to shaping THT's identity as a whole.

The exercise helped refine THT's vision, mission, positioning, communication framework and brand architecture, weaving a common thread through every story, campaign, event, partnership and publication — including this Annual Report.



02 SHAPING UNDERSTANDING

Conservation work often begins with research, field observations and technical knowledge — and the challenge lies in making that depth accessible. Throughout the year, the team worked closely with other programme teams to translate field knowledge and insights into communications material for intended audiences.

Films remained a particularly important medium for this, taking conservation conversations beyond the field into classrooms, festivals, conferences, digital platforms and communities.

Creative communication also supported programmes at different stages of their engagement. The Grants Cycle call was given a distinct visual theme and outreach identity, while the Conservation Practitioners Course benefited from learning materials shaped by the creative eyes of the Comms Team to strengthen learning and participant engagement.

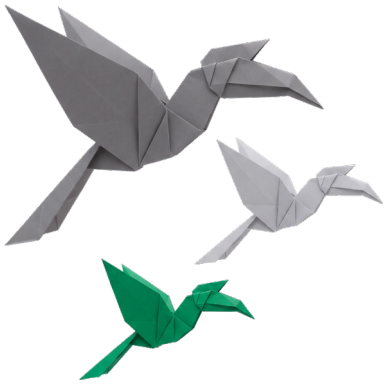
Across these efforts, design and storytelling helped make programmes easier to understand and knowledge easier to share.

THE SHIFT

From only supporting communications to aligning identity

BEFORE 2025–26	2025–26	2026–27 & BEYOND
SUPPORTING COMMUNICATION Across programmes, partnerships and platforms	**ALIGNING ORGANISATIONAL IDENTITY** A renewed brand strategy, communication framework and positioning	**BUILDING AUTHORITY AND INFLUENCE** Strengthening THT as a trusted knowledge and solutions partner for conservation.

FROM FIELD TO AUDIENCES



FILMS, WIDENING ACCESS

Conservation stories reached wider audiences: on screen, online and in communities.

A GROWING PORTFOLIO

THT films captured the breadth of India's conservation landscape.

- **28 ecosystems | 2 Biodiversity Hotspots | 51 faunal species | 24 faunal groups | 5 unique plant families**
- **New films and series expanded THT's film portfolio**, including:
  - » *On the Brink* (A ten-part series spotlighting India's most threatened species)
  - » *MahaMTB* (100 films on Maharashtra's habitats and species),
  - » *Shared Spaces* (A six-part series on human–wildlife coexistence) and
  - » *Seeking Sardines* (A distinct lens on marine ecosystems, fisheries and livelihoods)
- **Regional storytelling** extended through Stories from the Ground with 50 films from Northeast India, alongside films from Tadoba, Dudhwa, and Lakshadweep.
- **Existing films refreshed for digital platforms;** new thumbnails improved YouTube visibility and reach.

FROM FESTIVALS TO CLASSROOMS

Films travelled beyond the digital screen, gaining recognition.

74
International Film & National Film festivals selections

3
Awards

- **THT's leadership took the stage at the ALT EFF Film Festival,** with Director, Rushikesh Chavan and Marine Lead, Abhishek Jamalabad speaking at its opening and closing events respectively.
- Beyond festivals, films were screened at **12 Educational Institutions, 4 Conferences and several public events.**

The result was not simply wider access, but more spaces in which conservation stories could prompt discussion and reflection.

TAKING STORIES TO COMMUNITIES

Films became a tool for conversation on the ground.

- Community screenings reached **36 communities across Northeast India,** spanning Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim.
- In the Nicobar Islands, a special screening of the **Dugong** episode created space for conversations with indigenous communities around climate change and mental health.

Here, films moved beyond awareness to become starting points for engagement.

CRAFTING OUTREACH

Creative campaigns and visual resources designed for conservation initiatives

- The team created the **Grants Cycle theme, along with its ads and materials** to engage applicants and boost visibility.
- Campaign communication also supported **C4, CMS LiFE for Nature Summit and THAT Meet 2026.**

SUPPORTING LEARNING

Participant-focused resources developed to strengthen engagement and learning outcomes

- For the **Conservation Practitioners Course,** creatively designed learning materials that made complex conservation concepts easier to navigate and engage with.
- The team also organised **Shiksha Samridhi Workshops** in Bulandshahr and Sitapur districts of Uttar Pradesh, using creative approaches to make biodiversity topics more interesting for school students.

The focus was simple: **make knowledge easier to understand and remember.**

SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Research and Insights translated into accessible resources and reports

- The programme designed and produced THT resources, including the **Annual Report 2025–26,** and facilitated cross-programme communication through programme videos, report design, social media, and photographic resources.
- Supported **Vidarbha Report | Indian Navy Biodiversity Report | Interactive Impact Map | 3D Visualisation | Navy boat branding | IISER social media**
- The year also generated **27 media stories and newspaper features**, extending THT's work into wider public conversations.

ENABLING THE REACH

Stronger digital systems and infrastructure enable communication across THT

- The team managed SEO, website and media systems, cloud uploads, asset licensing and digital security to strengthen THT's ability to publish, manage and distribute work effectively.



03 DEEPENING ENGAGEMENT

Communication is not only about reaching audiences. It is also about creating opportunities for people to meet, exchange ideas and act together.

In 2025–26, this became an increasingly important part of the programme — bringing together partners, institutions, policymakers, media, educators, practitioners and communities around environmental issues.

Several engagements stood out.







KEY ENGAGEMENTS

THAT MEET 2026

Bringing the THT network together

THT Partners came together for two days of interaction and exchange, supported by curated installations and interactive engagement formats.

LIFE FOR NATURE SUMMITS - ASSAM | ANDHRA PRADESH

Creating space for policy dialogue

Policymakers, government officials, media, educators and practitioners were brought under one roof. The initiative was a first-of-its-kind pilot for state-level dialogue on conservation challenges and solutions. **Event Partner: CMS Vatavaran**

SANCTUARY ASIA PARTNERSHIP

Broadening conservation conversations

THT's work reached wider conservation and public audiences through its partnership with Sanctuary Asia, through monthly editorial and illustration contributions, collaborative digital campaigns, and co-hosted events.

C4 CAMPAIGN

Amplifying collective conservation action

THT collaborated with WWF, Aaranyak, BNHS, CWS, Green Hub, WCS, WCT, WRCS and other ecosystem partners on a multi-partner conservation communications initiative. The initiative brought diverse organisations together across digital platforms and around shared conservation priorities.



SPOTLIGHT STORY

Expressing an Evolving Organisation

As THT refined its vision, mission and communication framework during 2025–26, a simple but powerful idea began to emerge:



THIS PROBLEM TO THAT SOLUTION.

THIS reflects the **challenges we face today.**

THAT expresses an aspirational mindset, looking beyond the present and envisioning what could be possible. Rooted in The Habitats Trust's name, it brings together THT's diverse programmes, partnerships, knowledge and on-ground action around a common purpose: finding practical solutions to complex environmental problems. THAT also captures the spirit of creativity, innovation and problem-solving required to build a thriving future.

Together, THIS PROBLEM to THAT SOLUTION expresses THT's challenges and its aspirations — connecting what exists today with what could be achieved tomorrow.

Through the year, the Communication and Branding team helped translate the idea into a consistent expression of THT's evolving identity. The team developed and applied the THIS PROBLEM to THAT SOLUTION narrative across the Annual Report, THAT Meet, campaigns, media and digital platforms, creating a unifying thread across the organisation.

THIS PROBLEM to THAT SOLUTION is not a new identity replacing the old one. It is an expression of where THT is headed, and a way of making that direction recognisable across the organisation.



MILESTONES THAT SHAPED 2025–26

1

REDEFINED BRAND IDENTITY, ONE VOICE

THT's Brand Repositioning created a more consistent expression of its evolving role as a solutions-oriented conservation partner across platforms and partnerships.

9500+

INDIVIDUALS REACHED

On the Brink carried conservation stories beyond festivals and into classrooms, conferences and communities - including a special Nicobar Islands screening connecting climate change to community wellbeing.

150+

INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS ENGAGED

THAT Meet 2026 brought together institutional partners to strengthen collaboration and foster cross-sector dialogue on conservation's toughest challenges.

TO BE CONTINUED... FY 2026–27

Building on the progress made this year, the focus now moves towards greater depth, consistency and influence. Four priorities will guide the next phase of the programme:

ONE THT | INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Embed the identity and communication framework consistently across the organisation.

DEEPER STORYTELLING

Build a focused portfolio of films, digital stories and conversations around Biodiversity, Culture and Solutions.

DIGITAL AUTHORITY

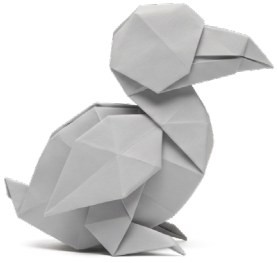
Build stronger visibility and discoverability around THT's priority issues, evidence and expertise.

PARTNERSHIPS

Deepen engagement with institutions, experts and collaborators through shared platforms.

Identity is never static. As THT evolves, the Communication & Branding Programme continues to shape its identity — through every innovation, every partnership, every story and every conversation. From THIS PROBLEM to THAT SOLUTION.







THE HABITATS TRUST



FROM PROPOSAL TO PRACTICE

Grants Programme 2025–26:
Investing in impact-enabling Ideas

THAT SOLUTION

FROM PROPOSAL TO PRACTICE

Grants Programme 2025–26: Investing in impact-enabling Ideas

At first glance, it looks like a simple arithmetic relation. In reality, months of deliberation lie between those two numbers — proposals read and re-read, debated, field visits undertaken, questions revisited again and again. Is this project ready? Will it hold up in the field? Does it help a species or habitat that is often overlooked?

This is the quieter work behind every grant The Habitats Trust awards. Not the moment funding is announced, but everything that happens before it: the careful scrutiny, difficult conversations, and weighed decisions that determine where support can make the greatest difference.

In 2025–26, this process continued to evolve. The focus was not only on selecting projects but also on strengthening the programme itself by refining grant pathways, assessing impact with new approaches, and continually asking how conservation could be better supported.

THE PROGRAMME

Every conservation project begins with an idea. But ideas alone do not protect habitats or species — they need resources and funding to turn into action.

THT's Grants Programme supports organisations and individuals working to conserve India's native flora, fauna and natural habitats, with a particular focus on lesser-known species and overlooked ecosystems. The programme aims to support holistic, innovative, and replicable conservation projects at various stages of development.

THE PEOPLE

119 proposals. Rigorous evaluation. Strategic funding. Enabling conservation where it matters most:

Rutuja Dhamale (Programme Lead)

Ninad Bhosale (Associate Manager)

Reetika M (Associate Manager)

Aashish Gokhale (Senior Executive)

Hilor Gulati (Consultant)



GRANTS AT A GLANCE

THT offers four grant types to support different conservation needs—from emerging ideas and immediate action to long-term programmes and research.

ANNUAL GRANTS

01 Conservation Grant
Rs. 1 Crore | 3 Years | 2 organisations
Organisations only · 3+ years' track record
Long-term programmes for lesser-known species and critical habitats.

02 Action Grant
Rs. 25 Lakhs | 2 Years | 3 grantees
Individuals and Organisations
Urgent on-ground conservation for threatened species and habitats.

03 Research Grant (Introduced in 2025)
Rs. 40 Lakhs | 2 Years | 2 organisations
Organisations only
Interdisciplinary research that builds the evidence needed for future conservation action.



SEED GRANT (Rolling Grants)
Rs. 3 Lakhs | Up to 12 months
Individuals and Organisations
Emerging ideas and gap-filling projects — a strategic first step towards larger conservation efforts.
Year-round support for emerging ideas and early-stage conservation projects.

THE JOURNEY OF THE 2025–26 GRANTS

DRIVEN BY CONSERVATION CHALLENGES



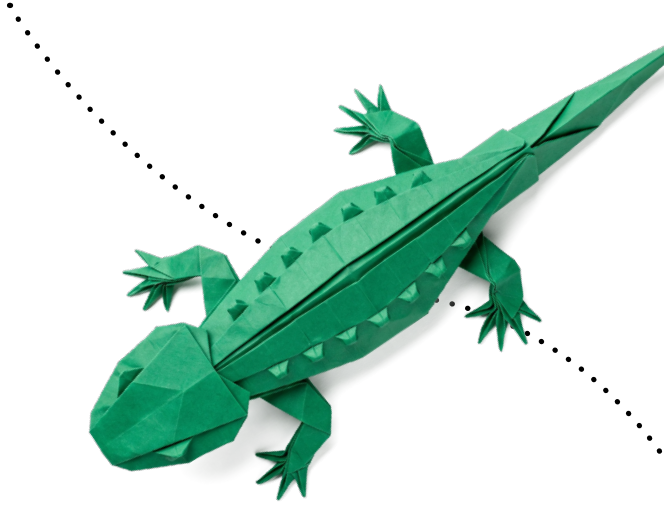




At the heart of every proposal was a conservation challenge. Some sought to protect little-known species. Others explored workable solutions for threatened habitats or engaged communities to address local conservation needs.

Behind every application lay months — and in some cases, years — of fieldwork, research and planning. Some proposals called for immediate conservation action, while others aimed to generate the knowledge needed before action could begin.

The Grants Programme looked beyond the idea itself, assessing whether a project was scientifically sound, feasible and capable of creating lasting conservation impact.



LOOKING BEYOND THE WRITTEN PROPOSAL

Some details could not be found on an application alone.

Field evaluations took the Grants team beyond the written proposal. They provided an opportunity to understand landscapes, meet practitioners and verify the realities behind the proposals. They also helped the Grants team appreciate implementation challenges, engage directly with applicants and place proposals within their on-ground context.





AROUND THE JURY TABLE





Every proposal that reached the Jury had already undergone a rigorous technical review.

Independent experts evaluated projects through multiple perspectives including scientific merit, feasibility, conservation need, innovation, scalability and long-term potential. Together, these discussions determined where limited resources could create the greatest conservation impact.

IDEAS BECAME ACTION







Once the grants were awarded, the real work began.

Across forests, mountains, wetlands, coastlines and community-managed landscapes, grantees protected species, restored habitats, strengthened local stewardship and generated knowledge that would continue to inform conservation decisions. Together, these projects demonstrated how carefully evaluated ideas become meaningful action on the ground.

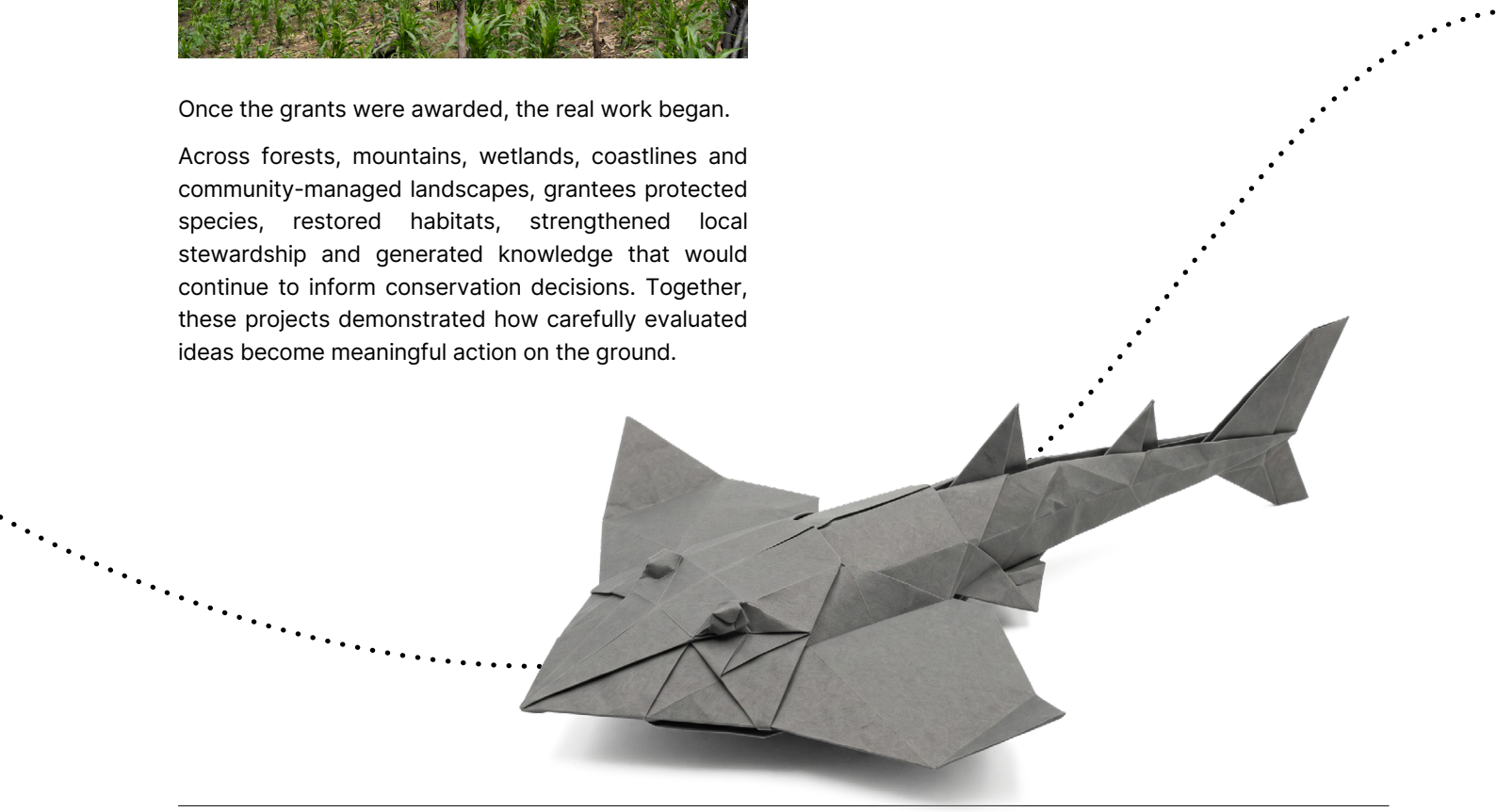
MEASURING WHAT MATTERED: A NEW EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Funding was only one part of the journey.

Until 2025, project evaluations measured progress against the objectives, activities, outcomes and budgets in the original proposal — effective for tracking project delivery, but incomplete for understanding lasting impact.

Recognising that conservation success extends beyond project delivery, THT introduced a new evaluation framework in 2025. Co-created with 5 independent conservation experts and piloted across 11 ongoing projects, it moved away from a checklist-style review, focusing instead on open conversations that helped identify what worked well and where projects could grow.

Alongside field visits, it looked at how projects had progressed, how organisations had grown, how communities were involved, the challenges teams had faced, and whether the work could continue beyond the grant period. The resulting insights strengthened individual projects while also helping THT refine its grant strategy and maximise long-term conservation impact.



SPOTLIGHT STORY

The Launch of the Research Grant

Not every conservation challenge begins with the absence of action. Sometimes, it begins with the absence of knowledge.

Many of India's lesser-known species and habitats remain poorly understood, and effective conservation depends on evidence that, for many, simply didn't exist yet. THT Grants began seeing this gap in its own applications. Proposals for data-deficient species increasingly included a strong research component, aimed at generating the baseline knowledge needed to inform conservation decisions. But these proposals fit neither of the existing grant categories — one built for holistic action on identified challenges, and the other for urgent on-ground interventions.

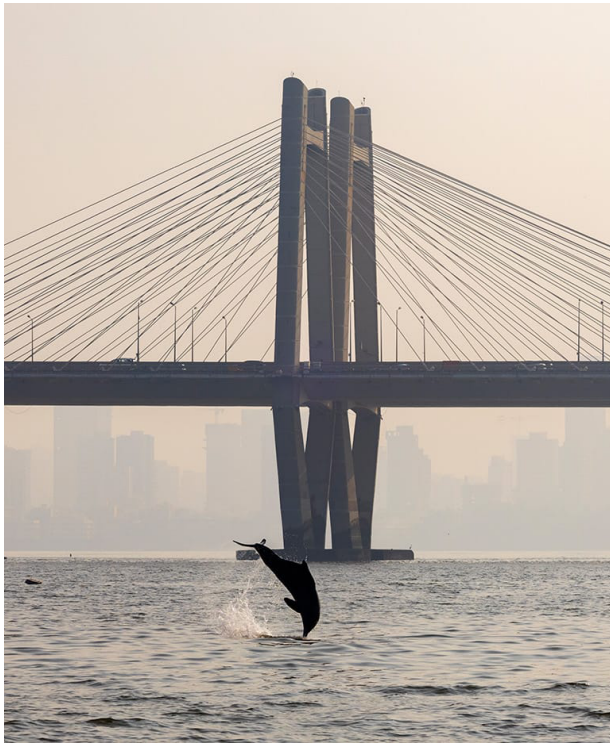
The gap was measurable. On average, 4–5 otherwise strong applications were rejected each year at the sub-jury stage, not for lack of merit, but for not fitting in either grant category. Each represented an opportunity to better understand a poorly studied species or habitat, and to lay groundwork for future conservation efforts.

To close this gap, THT introduced a dedicated Research Grant category in 2025, to fund research that generates evidence for future conservation planning, especially for overlooked, data-deficient species and threatened habitats.

More than a new addition, it marked an evolution in the programme itself by recognising that investing in research is also an investment in conservation.









MILESTONES THAT SHAPED 2025–26

8
ANNUAL GRANTS

20
SEED GRANTS

Supporting a diverse portfolio of conservation initiatives—from long-term projects to timely, short-term interventions across India's landscapes.

119

APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

Proposals submitted from across India addressing diverse conservation challenges.

₹43.8Mn

INVESTED IN CONSERVATION

Funding committed towards Annual and Seed Grant projects supporting conservation across India.

TO BE CONTINUED... FY 2026–27

Building on this year's learning, the Grants Programme will continue strengthening how conservation ideas are identified, supported, and understood while preparing for an important milestone: 10 years of THT's grant journey.

DELIVERING THE NINTH GRANTS CYCLE

Implement the 2026 Grants Cycle through timely, transparent, and standardised processes, while documenting learnings that strengthen future grant-making.

LEARNING FROM CONSERVATION

Continue project evaluations and translate insights into improvements for both grantee projects and the Grants Programme.

BUILDING TOWARDS A DECADE OF IMPACTS

Begin preparations for the tenth edition of THT's Grants Programme, marking a decade of supporting conservation practitioners across India.

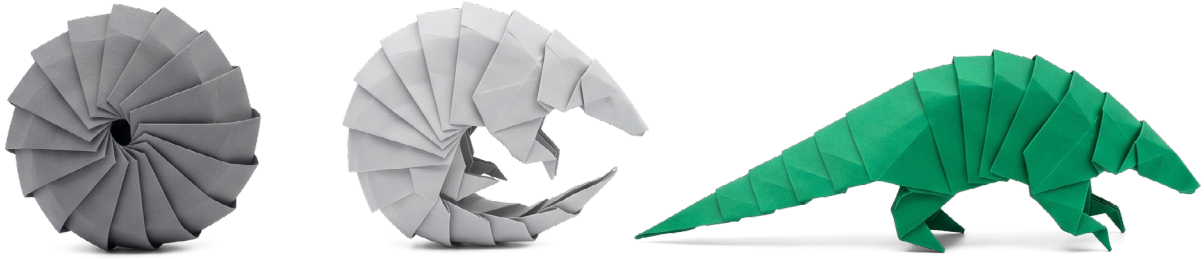
STRENGTHENING SEED GRANTS

Further streamline the Seed Grants process to provide timely support for emerging conservation opportunities.

REFINING THE PROGRAMME VISION

Develop a clearer vision for the Grants Programme and refine grant categories to better align applicants, projects, and conservation priorities.

From proposal to practice, the work continues—shaped by partnership, sharpened by learning, and carried forward by commitment.



THE HABITATS TRUST

PR & MEDIA



THAT SOLUTION

June, 2025

THT PARTNERSHIP WITH THE INDIAN NAVY AND HCL FOUNDATION ON WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Coastal conservation collaboration of the Indian Navy with THT and the HCL Foundation, a PIB release.

Marking World Environment Day 2025, the Ministry of Defence highlighted the Indian Navy's tripartite MoU with THT and HCL Foundation to rejuvenate India's coastal ecosystems under its Green Initiative Programme. The partnership advanced plans for floating trash barriers and biodiversity surveys, while THT experts led sessions across naval stations on plastic pollution's impact on marine life, alongside beach clean-ups and mangrove restoration.

https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2134273&reg=3&lang=2



Ministry of Defence

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2025 INDIAN NAVY'S EFFORTS TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Posted On: 05 JUN 2025 6:09PM by PIB Delhi

As a force committed to environmental responsibility, the Indian Navy continues to accelerate its shift towards renewable energy and minimize its ecological footprint through sustainable practices. With its Green Initiative Programme gaining momentum, occasions like World Environment Day serve as pivotal milestones to reinforce the Navy's commitment to global environmental efforts. This year, naval units and establishments nationwide have launched an extensive set of initiatives, driving the transformation towards a 'Cleaner and Greener Environment'.

The theme for World Environment Day 2025 focuses on ***'Ending Plastic Pollution Globally'***. To extend this theme, efforts such as **as declaration of Naval Stations as 'No Plastic Zone', webinars and poster competitions to reduce single-use plastic, conduct of public pledges, plastic disposal and retrieval from coastal areas, new initiatives on mangroves plantations, seaweed cultivation and coral reef surveys** have been facilitated with close interaction with all Central and State government bodies and a large number of government nominated and environmentally conscious firms.

Further reinforcing the Navy's commitment to coastal preservation, the feasibility of installing **floating trash barriers** and **biodiversity surveys** have also been progressed under the aegis of the MoU concluded with **M/s The Habitats Trust and HCL Foundation** towards rejuvenating the coastal ecosystem.

Recognizing the crucial role of education in environmental conservation, **interactive sessions, lectures, and workshops** have been conducted across naval stations, office premises, and residential quarters. Experts from The Habitats Trust have spearheaded discussions on **the devastating impact of plastic pollution on marine life**, ensuring widespread engagement and knowledge-sharing.

Across naval establishments, **Plastic Collection Drives** have been mobilized to eliminate single-use plastics. Through collective action, including ***Shramdaan* efforts**, naval personnel and families have demonstrated a resolute commitment to maintaining a clean and sustainable environment.

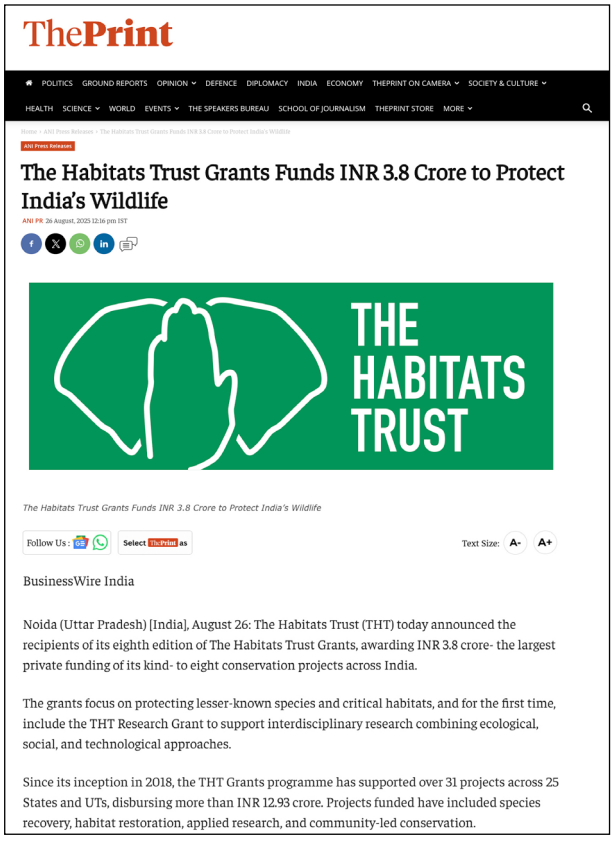
The Indian Navy has organized **nationwide beach clean-up drives** at coastal stations, fostering large-scale participation among **Naval, DSC, and Defence civilian personnel, along with their families**. These events aim to raise awareness about the environmental hazards posed by non-biodegradable waste.

Further extending this mission, **poster-making competitions** on the themes of **land restoration, desertification, and drought resilience** have been conducted to engage and educate personnel.

Tree re-plantation drives have also been initiated to reinforce local ecosystems and contribute to carbon sequestration. Using advanced replantation techniques, trees ranging from **two to seven years of age** are being carefully relocated to maximize their environmental impact.

As natural barriers against storms, floods, and erosion, **mangroves** play a critical role in coastal protection. The Indian Navy is spearheading a **phased manner** comprehensive campaign **to expand mangrove plantations across coastal belts, engaging leading mangrove experts to assess existing plantations and initiate fresh drives**.

The Indian Navy remains steadfast in its mission to uphold environmental stewardship, working tirelessly to drive sustainability while safeguarding India's rich maritime ecosystem. On this World Environment Day, the Navy reaffirms its commitment to a cleaner and greener future.



ThePrint

POLITICS GROUND REPORTS OPINION DEFENCE DIPLOMACY INDIA ECONOMY THEPRINT ON CAMERA SOCIETY & CULTURE
HEALTH SCIENCE WORLD EVENTS THE SPEAKERS BUREAU SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM THEPRINT STORE MORE

ANI Press Releases

The Habitats Trust Grants Funds INR 3.8 Crore to Protect India's Wildlife

ANI PR 26 August, 2025 12:16 pm IST

THE HABITATS TRUST

The Habitats Trust Grants Funds INR 3.8 Crore to Protect India's Wildlife

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BusinessWire India

Noida (Uttar Pradesh) [India], August 26: The Habitats Trust (THT) today announced the recipients of its eighth edition of The Habitats Trust Grants, awarding INR 3.8 crore- the largest private funding of its kind- to eight conservation projects across India.

The grants focus on protecting lesser-known species and critical habitats, and for the first time, include the THT Research Grant to support interdisciplinary research combining ecological, social, and technological approaches.

Since its inception in 2018, the THT Grants programme has supported over 31 projects across 25 States and UTs, disbursing more than INR 12.93 crore. Projects funded have included species recovery, habitat restoration, applied research, and community-led conservation.

August, 2025

EIGHTH EDITION OF THE HABITATS TRUST GRANTS ANNOUNCED

Largest-ever of its kind THT Grants disbursal to eight conservation projects, The Print / ANI coverage.

THT awarded INR 3.8 crore, its largest disbursal yet, to eight conservation projects, introducing a new THT Research Grant for interdisciplinary science. Since 2018, THT Grants have supported 31+ projects across 25 States and UTs, disbursing over INR 12.93 crore.

https://theprint.in/ani-press-releases/the-habitats-trust-grants-funds-inr-3-8-crore-to-protect-indias-wildlife/2729125/

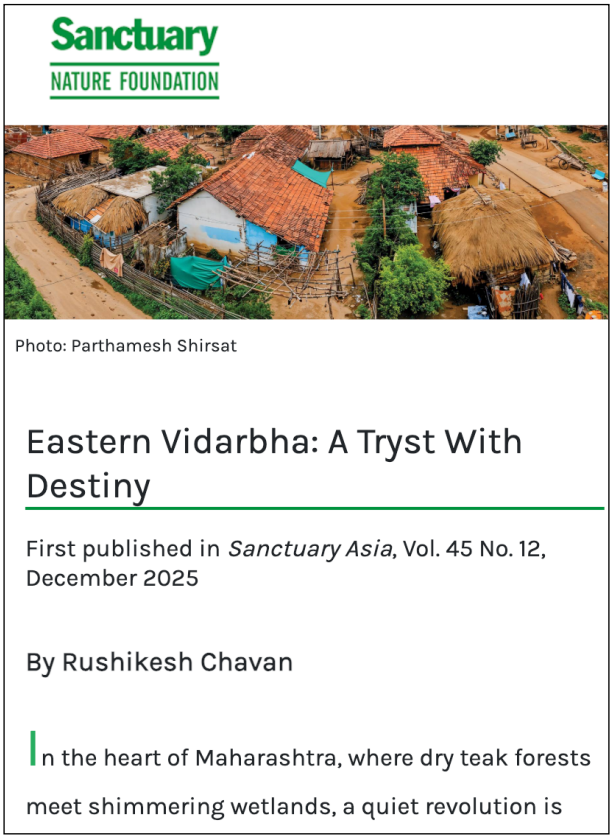
December, 2025

A REGENERATIVE ECONOMIC VISION FOR EASTERN VIDARBHA

THT's Nature Asset Company model for Eastern Vidarbha, a Sanctuary Asia feature.

THT Director Rushikesh Chavan's development blueprint for Eastern Vidarbha proposes a Nature Asset Company that treats forests, grasslands and farmlands as living assets, from agroforestry and forest foods to ecotourism and carbon and biodiversity credits. The plan argues that Maharashtra's growth ambitions and ecological restoration need not be at odds, projecting steady rural income growth once regenerative value chains take hold in the region's six districts.

https://www.sanctuarynaturefoundation.org/article/eastern-vidarbha%3A-a-tryst-with-destiny



Sanctuary
NATURE FOUNDATION

Photo: Parthamesh Shirsat

Eastern Vidarbha: A Tryst With Destiny

First published in *Sanctuary Asia*, Vol. 45 No. 12, December 2025

By Rushikesh Chavan

In the heart of Maharashtra, where dry teak forests meet shimmering wetlands, a quiet revolution is

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WORLD WILDLIFE DAY | MARCH 3

GIBBONS ON THE BRINK

As their numbers crash from 100,000 to under 5,000, stress tests and tech solutions come to the rescue

estimated 100,000 individuals to less than 5,000.

Addressing these overlapping threats to the western hoolock gibbon requires more than isolated research or localised interventions. Increasingly, this work is being coordinated through The Habitats Trust (THT), a Delhi-based conservation organisation that acts as a platform bringing together field scientists, local NGOs, technologists and community actors to address gaps in data, monitoring and long-term protection of species across fragmented landscapes in Northeast India.

Studying genetics and stress

The challenges faced by gibbons are emblematic of pressures on low-lying rainforests in Northeast India, says Rushikesh Chavan, director of THT. He adds that changing land use and *jhoom* cultivation are key threats to the species. "Previously, these cycles of slashing and burning would last decades, where forests would be destroyed and then allowed to regenerate. However, these cycles have now come down from decades to just 7-10 years due

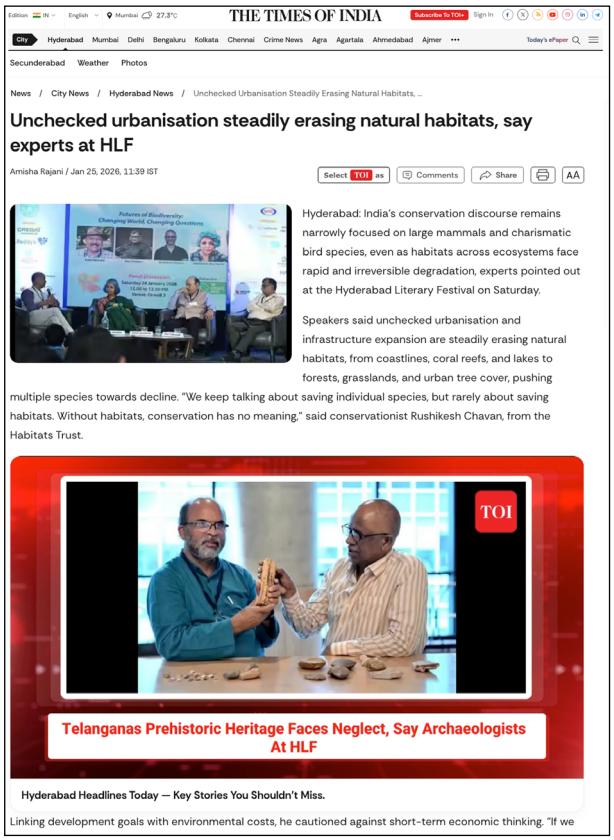
January, 2026

STRESS TESTS AND DRONES TO PROTECT HOOLOCK GIBBON

THT's tech-driven approach to Hoolock gibbon conservation, a coverage in The Hindu.

THT's approach to protecting the endangered western hoolock gibbon spans thermal drones to hormone-based stress testing of the primates, part of the organisation's broader push to bring the lesser-studied species into India's conservation mainstream.

https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/western-hoolock-gibbon-endangered-assam-northeast-conservation/article70406652.ece



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Unchecked urbanisation steadily erasing natural habitats, say experts at HLF

Amisha Rajani / Jan 25, 2026, 11:39 IST

Hyderabad: India's conservation discourse remains narrowly focused on large mammals and charismatic bird species, even as habitats across ecosystems face rapid and irreversible degradation, experts pointed out at the Hyderabad Literary Festival on Saturday.

Speakers said unchecked urbanisation and infrastructure expansion are steadily erasing natural habitats, from coastlines, coral reefs, and lakes to forests, grasslands, and urban tree cover, pushing multiple species towards decline. "We keep talking about saving individual species, but rarely about saving habitats. Without habitats, conservation has no meaning," said conservationist Rushikesh Chavan, from the Habitats Trust.

Hyderabad Headlines Today — Key Stories You Shouldn't Miss.

Linking development goals with environmental costs, he cautioned against short-term economic thinking. "If we

January, 2026

THE HABITATS TRUST AT THE HYDERABAD LITERARY FESTIVAL

Unchecked urbanisation and vanishing habitats, a Times of India - Hyderabad coverage.

At the Hyderabad Literary Festival's "Futures of Biodiversity" panel, THT Director Rushikesh Chavan joined fellow conservationists to discuss how unchecked urbanisation and shifting consumption patterns are steadily eroding India's natural habitats — and called for restoring a genuine connection with the natural world, even as cities continue to expand.

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/unchecked-urbanisation-steadily-erasing-natural-habitats-say-experts-at-hlf/articleshow/127455481.cms

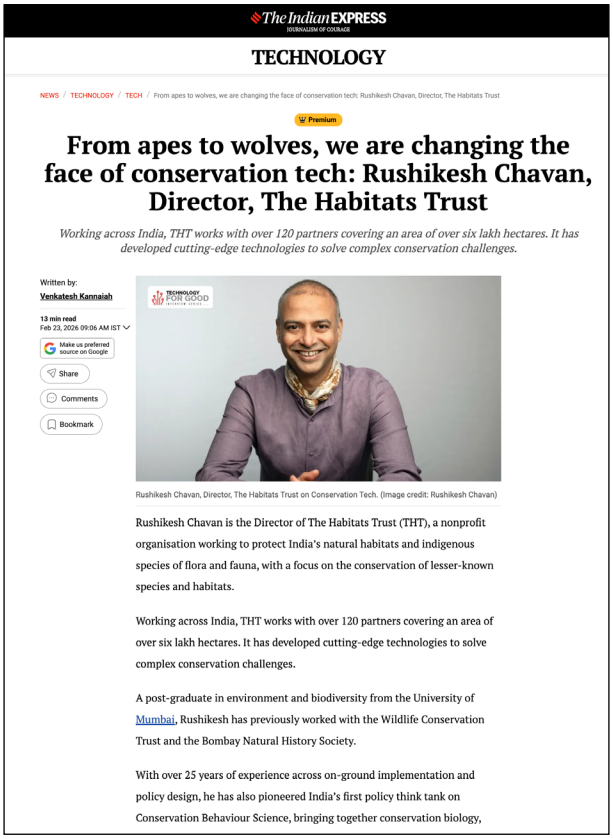
February, 2026

THE HABITATS TRUST HARNESSES TECHNOLOGY FOR CONSERVATION

Deploying technology to tackle conservation challenges, an Indian Express report.

The Habitats Trust is deploying a mix of technologies, from bioacoustics and AI-powered camera traps to thermal imaging, satellite imagery and remotely operated vehicles, to tackle conservation challenges across species and habitats. These tools are opening up new insights, sharpening the efficiency of field research and reinforcing conservation efforts on the ground.

https://indianexpress.com/article/technology/tech-news-technology/tech-conservation-rushikesh-chavan-the-habitats-trust-10542679/



The Indian EXPRESS

TECHNOLOGY

NEWS / TECHNOLOGY / TECH / From apes to wolves, we are changing the face of conservation tech: Rushikesh Chavan, Director, The Habitats Trust

Premium

From apes to wolves, we are changing the face of conservation tech: Rushikesh Chavan, Director, The Habitats Trust

Working across India, THT works with over 120 partners covering an area of over six lakh hectares. It has developed cutting-edge technologies to solve complex conservation challenges.

Written by: Venkatesh Kannaiah

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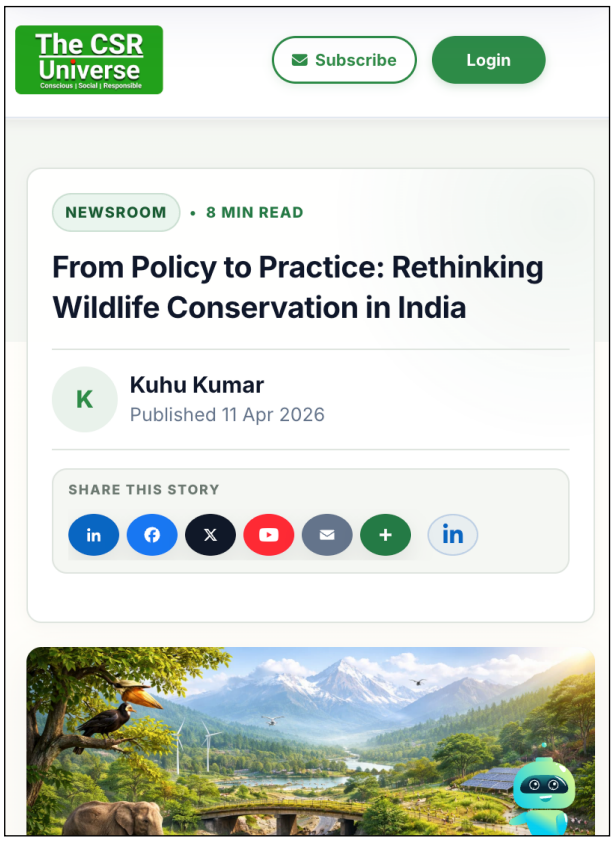
Rushikesh Chavan, Director, The Habitats Trust on Conservation Tech. (Image credit: Rushikesh Chavan)

Rushikesh Chavan is the Director of The Habitats Trust (THT), a nonprofit organisation working to protect India's natural habitats and indigenous species of flora and fauna, with a focus on the conservation of lesser-known species and habitats.

Working across India, THT works with over 120 partners covering an area of over six lakh hectares. It has developed cutting-edge technologies to solve complex conservation challenges.

A post-graduate in environment and biodiversity from the University of Mumbai, Rushikesh has previously worked with the Wildlife Conservation Trust and the Bombay Natural History Society.

With over 25 years of experience across on-ground implementation and policy design, he has also pioneered India's first policy think tank on Conservation Behaviour Science, bringing together conservation biology,



April, 2026

BRIDGING POLICY AND PRACTICE IN INDIA'S CONSERVATION SECTOR

India's path from conservation policy to practice, a feature in The CSR Universe.

THT Director Rushikesh Chavan described India's core conservation challenge as a "friction of implementation" — habitat fragmentation, reactive conflict management and persistent data gaps — and called for philanthropy to act as "risk capital," helping shift conservation from a species-by-species approach to landscape-level, ecosystem-wide thinking.

https://thecsruniverse.com/articles/from-policy-to-practice-rethinking-wildlife-conservation-in-india

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April, 2026

THT ON SAFEGUARDING INDIA'S GRASSLANDS

Protecting India's Open Natural Ecosystems, a Sanctuary Asia feature.

THT's Technology for Conservation programme Lead, Santhosh Pavagada wrote on India's neglected Open Natural Ecosystems — grasslands, scrublands, deserts and ravines that shelter Schedule I species like wolves, hyenas and bustards yet remain officially classified as "wastelands." He traced their shrinking extent to agriculture, urban expansion and renewable energy projects, and called for dedicated mapping, policy and management practices to secure these habitats.

https://www.sanctuarynaturefoundation.org/article/grasslands-need-protection---now


Sanctuary
NATURE FOUNDATION

Photo: Santhosh Pavagada

Grasslands Need Protection - Now

First published in *Sanctuary Asia*, Vol. 46 No. 4, April 2026

By Santhosh Pavagada

I watched a lone striped hyena burst onto the wide, roaring Pune-Nashik highway, its gait uncertain, almost bewildered, as it tried to cross back into the other half of its fractured home. Traffic thundered past in

THE HABITATS TRUST

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