

SEPTEMBER 2025



A Rocha Field Study Centre
#13, Kaserguppe Village, Bilwardahalli (Dakle),
Bannerghatta (Post), Jigani (Hobli), Anekal (Taluk),
Bangalore South-560083 Karnataka - IN

Project Highlights

E L E P H A N T D I S T R I B U T I O N S T U D Y

Our field team is currently conducting research in Chittoor District to better understand patterns of wildlife movement and recent trends in human–elephant interactions. Elephants are a relatively new presence in this region, having first appeared in the 1980s, and over the decades they have gradually established their range across the landscape. Current observations indicate that while some herds now display localized movement within Chittoor, others continue to range in from adjoining protected areas, reflecting an evolving pattern of habitat use and connectivity. Alongside ecological observations, the team has been engaging with local communities to document their experiences, adaptive practices, and cultural perspectives on coexistence with wildlife. These conversations reveal a strong sense of resilience and understanding among residents, offering valuable insights into how human and elephant populations are learning to share space. Together, these findings contribute to a deeper understanding of coexistence in emerging elephant landscapes and highlight the importance of integrating community knowledge into conservation efforts.



A A N E M I T R A

This month, the Aane Mitra programme was launched at Bannerghatta Biological Park—an important milestone in strengthening community–led conservation and human–elephant conflict mitigation in Karnataka. Developed by the Karnataka Forest Department with technical support from A Rocha India, Aane Mitra is the state's first structured community volunteer framework for coexistence. The programme trains village volunteers in night vigilance, tracking, and collaboration with the Elephant Task Force (ETF). So far, 35 volunteers have joined and are connected through a dedicated WhatsApp network with forest staff, enhancing communication and shared responsibility. The launch was attended by senior forest officials, including Dr. Manoj Rajan, IFS; Ms. Kajol Patil, IFS; Shri Sivasankar S, IFS; and Mr. Surya Sen, IFS. With Aane Mitra, Karnataka takes a pioneering step toward a sustainable, community–driven model of human–elephant coexistence.



Project Highlights

B R T E T F T R A I N I N G

Our engagement in BRT Tiger Reserve focused on three key objectives. First, to deepen understanding of the Reserve's landscapes and conservation priorities, examining how habitat fragmentation, degradation, and rising elephant populations within limited ranges influence human-wildlife interactions. Second, to strengthen the capacity of the Elephant Task Force and anti-depredation frontline staff through science-based training and best practices for managing human-elephant conflict. This included interactive sessions where teams analyzed conflict drivers, mapped stakeholders, and proposed solutions, along with practical training on interpreting elephant behaviour, recognizing conflict patterns, and implementing safe field response protocols. Third, to evaluate the functionality of the Mudahalli Elephant Corridor following its expansion through land securement, while identifying emerging threats such as increasing vehicular speeds on NH-209 and broader habitat pressures that may affect its ecological connectivity. Conducted in collaboration with the Karnataka Forest Department, this initiative underscores the interdependence of landscapes, people, and elephants, emphasizing that strengthening frontline capacity and safeguarding corridors are vital to achieving resilient coexistence.



E L E P H A N T B A R R I E R A S S E S S M E N T C H I K M A G A L U R T E R R I T O R I A L D I V I S I O N

In collaboration with WWF India, our team conducted a comprehensive assessment of elephant barriers across three ranges of the Chikmagalur Territorial Division — Mudigere, Muthodi, and Alladur. Spanning nearly 80 kilometers on foot, the survey evaluated Elephant Proof Trenches (EPTs) and Solar Tentacle Fences, which serve as the first line of defense in mitigating human-elephant conflict. Measurements and condition assessments were carried out at one-kilometer intervals, with particular focus on areas surrounding coffee estates, where elephant movement and human interactions are most frequent. The findings from this field assessment will help identify structural gaps, improve the effectiveness of existing mitigation systems, and guide the implementation of adaptive measures to ensure the safety of both communities and wildlife.



SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

12TH MEETING OF THE IUCN SSC ASIAN ELEPHANT SPECIALIST GROUP

The 12th meeting of the IUCN SSC Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG), hosted by the Government of Vietnam, brought together members and partners from across Asia to share key updates and conservation initiatives from range countries. With around 90 of the 130 members in attendance, representing over 20 nations, the meeting marked an important moment of transition — the conclusion of Vivek Menon's remarkable 10-year tenure as Chair, and the appointment of Raman Sukumar as the new Chair to guide the next phase of the group's work.

Avinash Krishnan, National Director of A Rocha India and Member of the AsESG, presented preliminary findings from the Elephant Anti-Depredation Dog Squad (EaDDS), generating discussion on its potential applications and impact. A Rocha India also actively participated in working groups contributing to the formulation of research directions and conservation priorities for Asian elephant management and protection across the region.



WORKSHOPS AT THE STUDENT CONFERENCE ON CONSERVATION SCIENCE – BENGALURU

At this year's Student Conference on Conservation Science – Bengaluru (SCCS-Bengaluru), Sagarika Phalke, Research & Liaison Officer at A Rocha India, co-facilitated a workshop with Madhuri Ramesh titled "Thorny Subjects: Conducting Interviews on Conservation-Induced Conflict." The session highlighted the importance of integrating social dimensions into conservation practice, emphasizing that effective conservation extends beyond ecological research to include empathy, communication, and understanding of human experiences. Drawing from principles of counseling psychology, participants learned and practiced attending behaviors, active listening, and empathetic responding to build trust and rapport in sensitive interview contexts—skills essential for practitioners addressing conservation-induced conflict.

In addition, participants attended an introductory workshop on bioacoustics, exploring methods for recording and analyzing biological and environmental sounds. The session covered both active and passive recording techniques, best practices for data collection and analysis, and the role of acoustic monitoring in studying species behavior and ecosystem soundscapes.

Together, these workshops demonstrated the growing importance of interdisciplinary approaches in conservation—combining ecological science with human-centered understanding and technological innovation. A Rocha India is proud of Sagarika's contribution and appreciates platforms like SCCS-Bengaluru for nurturing collaborative learning and inspiring the next generation of conservation scientists.

