

# Bahraich Wolf Attack Action Plan

## SUMMARY

The Bahraich wolf attacks were a series of wolf attacks on humans that occurred between March and September 2024 in the Bahraich district in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The attacks were suspected to be carried out by a pack of six wolves. The local villagers claimed that nearly 24 wolves may be involved, citing the sightings of the animals in the villages. The attacks began in March and peaked during the monsoon, resulting in the deaths of nine children and one woman, with over 50 people injured.

The Uttar Pradesh government declared the region a "Wildlife Disaster" area to expedite support for victims and control measures.

Scientist Y.V. Jhala commented that there is no definite proof to link these wolves to the attacks and the attacks might have been carried out by wolves or wolf-dog hybrids.

According to Amita Kanaujia of Lucknow University, climate change has resulted in flooding during the monsoons, which has altered the habitat of wolves. As a result, the wolves are often driven out of their traditional habitat and forced into human settlements in search of food.

Officials stated that either the animals might have been infected by Rabies or they might have started to attack humans for encroaching on their territory.

The Forest Department launched "Operation Bhediya," using drones and thermal cameras to track and capture the wolves. By September, five wolves were either captured or killed, and the final wolf was beaten to death by villagers in October after attempting another attack. The captured wolves were tranquilised and sent to Gorakhpur Zoo. This brought an end to the months-long crisis.

Following multiple attacks, the villagers feared for their lives and even killed a dog on suspicion.

The state government has conducted awareness campaigns in the area and the villagers were instructed to install doors to the houses. Night patrolling was conducted and solar-powered lights were installed in common areas. Dung and urine of Indian elephants were used in an effort to ward off the wolves from the populated villages. The government announced an ex-gratia financial assistance of ₹500,000 (US\$6,000) to the deceased.

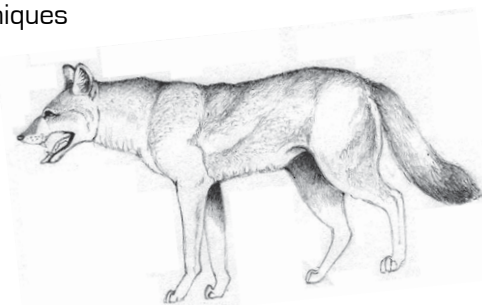
## NEGATIVE IMPACTS RAISED BY THE VILLAGERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

### Villagers:

- Villagers killed the wolves using brutal methods such as beating, which not only raised ethical concerns but also prevented scientific examination of the animals to confirm their involvement.
- Many villagers resorted to sleeping outdoors or on rooftops despite advisories. They formed vigilante groups that increased the risk of panic and unintended harm.

### Forest Department:

- Despite early reports of incidents, the officials failed to take early action which would have caused less harm to the people.
- Inefficient techniques to capture the wolves delayed the operation causing long-time panic



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## Police Department:

- The police faced criticism for not working effectively with forest officials and local leaders.

## Media:

- Media reports sensationalized the attacks, causing panic and fear among residents.
- Media sidelined the educational information on preventing wildlife conflicts and various reasons for the conflict occurrence.

## NGOs:

- Some NGOs tried to raise awareness, but their efforts were criticized as reactive and insufficient. Long-term measures to address human-wildlife negative interaction, such as habitat restoration or community training, were not effectively implemented.

## Action Plan

The following is the outcome of a group activity where we assumed the roles of various stakeholders involved in the Bahraich wolf attacks. Without delving into the real-world scenario, we collaboratively outlined the perspectives and potential contributions of each stakeholder in addressing the issue. Additionally, we offered a critique of the roles and actions of other stakeholders.

## VILLAGERS/SARPANCH

### MAIN OBJECTIVE:

#### a) Villagers:

- Farming (Livestock, Agriculture).
- Selling the goods from the farming to the local market.
- Involving in local decision making.
- Protecting the family.

- Personal choice of cultivating crops in his land.

#### b) Sarpanch:

- Heads the Gram Panchayat in governance and development in the village.
- Acts as a representative of the village in government dealings.
- Maintains law and order in the village (Solving Conflicts).
- Makes decisions along with villagers' consultation.

## ACTION PLAN

### I. Assessing night guards in the village.

- Equipping alerting system (Alerting systems like bells, WhatsApp group messages, etc.), which can be used by night guards to alert the villagers.
- Providing 24hrs basic first aid, medical and ambulance facilities.
- Assigning elders along with children while going to school or anywhere else.
- Avoid going out during dawn and dusk to mitigate unnecessary interaction.
- Maintaining proper sanitation and hygiene in and around the village.
- Constructing proper street light facilities for enhanced visibility at night.
- Inform the forest department and other stakeholders like NGOs, the Police department, local government representatives, etc. to deal with and provide information about the incidents.
- In case the problem is not solved, inform the media with facts.

## EVALUATION OF THE IMPACTS

The above action plan is just a temporary

solution that can raise awareness and reduce the interaction of villagers with animals. But for a permanent solution, all the stakeholders of government and non-government organisations and community involvement are necessary.

## FOREST DEPARTMENT

### Objectives of the Forest Department

- To safeguard human lives and livelihoods while adhering to the legal framework for wildlife protection.
- To manage and mitigate negative interactions between humans and wildlife, ensuring ethical, sustainable, and humane practices.
- To collaborate with all stakeholders for a balanced resolution that respects both ecological and social priorities.
- To foster trust and transparency with local communities by involving them in solutions and addressing their concerns promptly.
- To implement and recommend long-term strategies to minimize future conflicts and promote coexistence.

### Action Plan

- The Forest Department formulated a detailed and action-oriented plan to address the immediate wolf attack crisis and lay the groundwork for future prevention.
- Immediate Steps:
- A specialized task force was deployed to locate and neutralize problematic wolves. This effort resulted in the elimination of five wolves and the capture of two, significantly reducing the immediate threat.
- The police were involved to maintain law and order, though their initial reluctance delayed

critical actions, and their heavy-handed methods later caused unnecessary distress.

- Forest officials conducted on-ground surveys to ensure transparency and instill trust among affected families. Compensation was promptly announced for victims' families after thorough site assessments.
- Local communities were provided with walkie-talkies for real-time communication with the task force, improving response times and safety.

### Long-Term Initiatives:

- Conduct awareness programs to educate communities about coexistence practices and the importance of reporting wildlife sightings.
- Implement sustainable solutions, such as the provision of cooking gas to reduce dependence on firewood and installing solar streetlights to deter nocturnal predators.
- Collaborate with scientific communities and NGOs to develop advanced tracking methods, ecological monitoring systems, and research on predator behavior.
- Advocate for the establishment of a Wildlife Conservation Act to complement the existing Wildlife Protection Act, enabling a holistic approach to human-wildlife coexistence.
- Create a rapid-response force equipped with advanced tools and training to manage similar crises in the future.

### Evaluation of Actions Taken

The Forest Department successfully handled the crisis by neutralizing the immediate threat, compensating victims, and implementing community-friendly solutions. The provision of sustainable alternatives, such as solar streetlights and cooking gas, demonstrated a commitment to long-term coexistence. However, the operation exposed several challenges in stakeholder cooperation.

Despite these hurdles, the department's adherence to legal frameworks and ethical standards remained steadfast. While existing laws focus on protecting wildlife, the department ensured a balance between protecting endangered species and addressing human concerns, albeit constrained by the absence of broader conservation laws.

## Police Force

### Objectives:

- i. Enforce and maintain law and order.
- ii. Ensure welfare of the public.
- iii. Work in collaboration with the local government.

### Action plan:

- i. Deploy an ambulance with all required medical facilities. Alert the Forest Department about the situation on ground.
- ii. Reach the location at the earliest. Take measures to control and contain the agitated crowd.
- iii. Ensure safety and restrict movement of both people and their livestock.
- iv. Prevent gathering of the public and enforce a curfew if required.
- v. Communicate and collaborate with the local government.
- vi. Assist the Forest Department and provide the required human resource.
- vii. Communicate the relief plans of the Forest Department with the community to ensure smooth and timely implementation.
- viii. Regulate media presence at the site.
- ix. For a long-term plan, collaborate with the locals to establish a reporting system which will strengthen vigilance, monitoring and reporting of wolf sightings in the area. This

will aid the community in staying alert and minimize further encounters.

- x. In extreme situations when the above action points fail to be implemented or are no longer appropriate to the situation, be prepared to cull the wolf provided the Forest Department has approved of the same.

### Evaluation:

The police force is the point of first contact and is usually the first responder in conflict situations. The force is critical to enforcing law and order, especially in the presence of an agitated mob driven by emotion. If not contained efficiently, the mob outbreak can be fatal, which will in turn prevent the implementation of solutions. The Police Force is also required to assist and provide human resource to the already over-burdened Forest Department officials. They have a much-required role in serving as mediators between the Forest Department and the community.

Collaboration between the Police and the locals greatly contributes to the efficiency of establishing a monitoring and reporting system within the village. Such a system will increase the vigilance among the locals and reduce the probability of future encounters with wild animals.

## Human Wildlife Coexistence promoters (NGO)

### Objectives:

The primary goals are to raise funds for urgent conservation efforts, focusing on lesser-known species. The plan involves developing strong partnerships with forest departments, local stakeholders, and other organizations to create cohesive conservation strategies. Tailored conservation action plans will address specific threats to various species and their habitats.

Additionally, workshops and outreach programs will raise awareness and promote coexistence between communities and wildlife. The initiative also aims to empower local communities by creating sustainable livelihood opportunities that align with conservation goals, while educating and involving youth through training programs, mentorship, and volunteering.

### Action Plan:

The first step involves engaging local communities to understand their concerns by holding meetings with the forest department, local people, and the police. A key action is recruiting and training night guards from the community for patrolling. Improving hygiene will be addressed by building toilets and managing waste properly. To ensure safety, additional lighting systems will be installed around villages, and villagers will be given torches for mobility. A reporting mechanism will be set up for villagers to quickly report wolf sightings. Regular evaluations will help adapt strategies based on feedback. A perception study will explore community attitudes towards wolves, while children will be engaged through educational programs to foster empathy. Other measures include setting up predator-proof livestock enclosures, training villagers in non-lethal deterrents, and conducting research on wolf behavior, ecology, and the root causes of wolf attacks. Collaboration with wildlife experts will involve monitoring wolf populations and restoring habitats to reduce human-wolf conflicts. Lastly, conservation translocation will be considered as a last option.

### Evaluation:

The approach will build trust and address local issues, fostering community support for conservation through active involvement in decision-making. Employment opportunities will be provided, enhancing local ownership of conservation efforts. Measures to reduce fear and prevent wolf encounters will improve safety and reduce retaliatory actions. Timely responses and trust-building will enhance cooperation between

communities and conservation authorities. Insights into causes of negative interactions will lead to tailored strategies, while efforts to engage youth will foster a pro-wildlife attitude. Livestock protection strategies will reduce economic strain and lower retaliation against wolves. The community will be empowered to handle conflicts sustainably, and scientific research will provide critical data for proactive management. Reducing wolf dependency on human settlements and preventing hybridization and disease spread will contribute to the long-term health of the wolf population.

## MEDIA

### The Objectives of a Journalist:

- Reporting of the on-ground situation and its development over time.
- Disseminate verified facts and not opinions at an appropriate time.
- Identify the key stakeholders and choose who and when to mobilize (Note: mobilize not instigate) for immediate action and long-term action.
- Promoting accountability and collective action.

### Action Plan for the Wolf Attack Incidents:

#### I. Immediate Action-

- Speak to different stakeholders to understand the following:
  - Record of earlier similar incidents.
  - Perception study of what they think about the interaction and species.
  - What kind of support do they require and from which stakeholder?
- Mobilize police, forest department, NGOs, and communities for on-ground action.

- Mobilize the government for funds.
- Reporting of developments in the execution of the action plans they have claimed.

## 2. Long-term action-

- Mobilize conservationists for conservation-driven research.
- Reporting of further developments in the execution of the action plans they have claimed earlier.

## Impact of Journalist's Action

In India, news and stories about wildlife and its associated challenges often struggle to gain the attention they deserve. However, this time was different. As journalists, our actions brought this issue into the spotlight, elevating it beyond regional boundaries and giving it unprecedented national visibility. While journalism is sometimes met with skepticism or criticism, this instance highlights the undeniable role we played in making wildlife conservation a matter of public concern.

An essential aspect of this incident was the fragmented response among the stakeholders involved. Many were preoccupied with promoting their individual contributions, seeking credit for addressing the issue, rather than recognizing it as a shared challenge. Unfortunately, the critical need for co-ordination and collaboration among different parties was largely overlooked. Addressing wildlife issues in isolation cannot lead to effective or sustainable solutions; it requires collective ownership and a unified approach.

This is where we, as journalists, stepped in. Recognizing the lack of synergy, we took it upon ourselves to bridge the communication gap. We reached out to each stakeholder individually - whether government officials - be it police or the forest department, conservationists, local communities, scientists, or NGOs - to document their perspectives, concerns, and needs. These diverse voices were then consolidated and

broadcast to a wider audience, emphasizing the urgent need for collective action.

By highlighting the interdependence of stakeholders and framing the issue as a common concern, our reporting shifted the focus from individual achievements to the broader picture of sustainable resolution. Through our efforts, we not only informed the public but also acted as catalysts, encouraging dialogue and collaboration among all parties.

## State Government

### Objectives of the Government

- To protect citizens, livelihood, and ensure safety and well-being while ensuring adherence to laws governing wildlife protection and management.
- To establish effective coordination among various stakeholders to ensure swift and comprehensive action during crises.
- To foster public trust by addressing concerns, providing necessary resources, and maintaining transparency.
- To develop and implement long-term strategies to prevent similar incidents in the future, emphasizing preparedness, awareness, and collaboration.

### Action Plan

The government, recognizing the gravity of the wolf attack crisis, implemented a robust and multi-faceted action plan to address the immediate concerns and lay the groundwork for long-term solutions.

### Immediate Measures:

- A high-level meeting was held with local self-government authorities and the district administrative system to ensure a coordinated response.

- Compensation for affected families was prioritized, with the funds released immediately to alleviate their financial burden.
- The local MLA and the Minister of Forests visited the affected areas to analyze the situation, engage with the community, and reassure the public of their safety and the government's commitment.
- Orders were passed for the local government to install streetlights in the village on an urgent basis to reduce nocturnal wildlife movement and improve public safety.
- Regular school classes were temporarily suspended to ensure children's safety until the issue was resolved.
- An expert committee was formed under the district collector to monitor ongoing activities and provide strategic direction.
- Local NGOs were directed to maintain close contact with the community, raise awareness, and facilitate the implementation of government instructions.
- Media outlets were instructed to disseminate accurate, constructive information to assist both the public and the authorities in ensuring the smooth progression of operations.
- The Chief Wildlife Warden was authorized to capture all problematic wolves immediately. In cases where capture was deemed unfeasible due to terrain, weather, or other constraints, the warden was empowered to eliminate the animals on-site.

### Long-Term Initiatives:

- Conduct specialized training programs for villagers and forest guards to tackle future human-wildlife conflicts effectively, with assistance from NGOs.
- Commission detailed studies by the scientific

community to analyze the root causes of such incidents and devise preventive strategies.

- Develop educational campaigns to promote awareness about wildlife behavior and coexistence practices in vulnerable regions.
- Strengthen institutional frameworks for wildlife management, including the creation of rapid-response teams equipped to handle emergencies more effectively.

### Evaluation of Actions Taken

The government's prompt and decisive actions ensured a timely response to the crisis. The quick disbursement of compensation funds and on-site visits by senior officials reassured the affected community and restored some semblance of order. The installation of streetlights and temporary suspension of school activities highlighted the government's commitment to public safety.

The expert committee's formation under the district collector brought much-needed structure and oversight to the operations. Moreover, empowering the Chief Wildlife Warden with authority to neutralize the immediate threat reflected a pragmatic approach to the situation. While the immediate actions mitigated the crisis, the government's focus on long-term strategies, including training, scientific research, and public awareness, was commendable. These measures aim to ensure preparedness and minimize the recurrence of such conflicts in the future.

### Scientific community

**Objective:** To reduce negative interaction between human and animal

#### Plan of action:

- i. Systemic identification of the species using camera trapping.

- ii. Distribution and behavioral analysis of species.
  - Solitary or pack during hunting.
  - Feeding ecology.
- iii. Molecular analysis to understand if its hybrid or wild species.
- iv. Feral population and hybrid population.
- v. Effect of land use change on Population trends of the species.
- vi. Perception study of all relevant stakeholders.
- vii. Monitoring movement through:
  - Direct methods: Camera trapping, locations decided as per local people's citing
  - Indirect method: Sign surveys and radio collaring.
- viii. Livestock depredation monitoring and management.
- ix. Education and outreach objectives to combat myths about the species and its behavior.
- x. Last resort in case of negative interactions getting intensified Conservation translocation.

## Criticism from the different stakeholders

### Villagers point of view:

#### Forest Department:

Forest Department was slow to respond to the wolf attacks, with delays in action leading to more fatalities. The department lacked sufficient resources and coordination to track and capture the wolves effectively, leading to frustrations as the situation worsened.

#### Police:

The police was unable to do enough to prevent the escalation of the attacks. They didn't implement

enough safety measures or provide adequate support during the crisis, and there was poor communication about the steps being taken to address the situation.

#### NGOs:

NGOs were seen as playing a minimal role in the crisis. They did not involved in providing immediate relief or helping with the wolf capture efforts. They did not addressed the root causes for the attacks.

#### Media:

The media sensationalized the attacks, causing unnecessary panic. Also inaccurate reporting, as the media focused more on dramatic aspects rather than offering clear, factual information about the causes of the attacks and expert opinions.

#### Government:

The state government was delayed response, only declaring the area a "Wildlife Disaster" after significant loss of life. While some financial assistance was provided, that felt like government focused too much on short-term solutions, neglecting long-term measures to address the underlying causes of the attacks.

## Forest department point of view.

#### Local Community:

The community's initial violent outburst exacerbated the situation, resulting in unnecessary chaos. However, their subsequent cooperation in locating problematic wolves highlighted their potential as valuable partners in conflict management.

#### Police Department:

The role of the police was marred by their initial reluctance to assist, seemingly driven by ego and a desire to assert dominance. This delayed critical actions during the operation's early stages. Furthermore, their violent and heavy-handed

methods to control the mob were unnecessarily cruel, inciting fear and anger among the locals. Such behavior not only jeopardized trust but also strained inter-departmental collaboration.

### **NGOs:**

While NGOs like the Wildlife Mitigators Organization provided valuable insights on species tracking and monitoring, their overemphasis on species protection came at the cost of neglecting human concerns. Their approach lacked empathy for the victims and their families, creating friction with the local community and undermining the broader objective of coexistence.

### **Media:**

The media, instead of acting as a responsible informant, sensationalized the issue, spreading misinformation that the Forest Department prioritized wildlife protection over conservation. This narrative ignored the department's legal limitations and created unwarranted panic and chaos. The spread of false information damaged public perception and heightened tensions among stakeholders.

### **Government:**

Although the government extended prompt support during the crisis, its passive stance on enacting broader conservation laws is a significant shortcoming. The absence of a Wildlife Conservation Act limits the ability to address human-wildlife conflicts comprehensively.

## **Police department point of view.**

### **Local Community**

The local community should actively participate in efforts to address the issue and remain vigilant of their surroundings.

## **Forest Department**

We suggest that the Forest Department judiciously utilize their authority to take proactive measures to prevent human encroachment into natural habitats. They should work with the community to ensure sustainable use of resources and bring in regular monitoring and efficient alert systems to minimize negative interactions between animals and humans.

### **NGOs**

The NGOs should become more decisive and assertive in implementing their programs with the local community. They should also actively collaborate with the Forest Department in training and equipping the Police Force to tackle situations of human-wildlife interactions.

### **Media**

The significant role of journalists in mobilizing support and garnering attention is acknowledged. However, they must use their public reach to disseminate accurate information and contribute to the removal of myths and misinformation. They should portray the ground reality rather than building a negative image of the animal or any stakeholder involved. Journalists also have a crucial role in communicating the positive measures taken by the stakeholders in the affected area.

## **Journalists point of view.**

### **Forest Department**

Despite being understaffed, the Forest Department deserves appreciation for their immediate response and action in critical situations. However, their efforts often lack a foundation in scientific research, which is essential for sustainable outcomes.

Additionally, their approach tends to overlook the importance of engaging with and empowering local communities, a crucial element for long-term conservation success.

The Forest Department appears to be narrowly focused on 'protection' rather than embracing the broader and more dynamic concept of 'conservation'. Protection implies guarding species against immediate threats - such as poaching, habitat encroachment, or human-wildlife conflict - without necessarily addressing the underlying causes of these issues or ensuring long-term ecological balance. Conservation, on the other hand, entails a more holistic approach. It involves restoring habitats, promoting biodiversity, engaging local communities, and implementing sustainable practices that benefit both wildlife and human populations.

The Forest Department is often criticized for its slow pace in addressing critical issues, largely hindered by the bureaucratic cycle. Their response to the situation lacked the urgency it demanded, reflecting a reactive rather than proactive approach. To effectively tackle such challenges, they must streamline decision-making processes and adopt a more adaptive and dynamic strategy.

Another issue is the disbursement of the compensation, causing more opportunity and transaction costs making the issue more of a human-human conflict rather than a human-wildlife conflict.

## Police

A significant issue with both the police and the Forest Department lies in their highly polished and carefully curated press releases, which journalists are often forced to rely upon. However, when we conduct on-ground verification, the reality frequently presents a completely different narrative. The lack of consistency and corroboration in the information provided by various stakeholders further complicates our work, making it challenging to uncover the truth.

## NGOs

While many NGOs focus on conservation efforts with an emphasis on community involvement

and addressing local needs, their methods are not always grounded in scientific research. Instead of rushing to utilize available funds, these organizations should prioritize thorough, evidence-based research, even though such an approach may not always be appealing to funders. This would ensure that conservation initiatives are both effective and sustainable in the long run.

## Scientists

While scientists play a critical role through their focus on hard science and research, it is equally important for them to consider local communities as integral to the solution. Conservation efforts must recognize that human lives are just as valuable as the animal species they aim to protect. The ultimate goal of scientific work should extend beyond publications, striving for tangible, on-ground impact that balances ecological sustainability with the well-being of people.

## Government

The government is often slow to mobilize unless there is an opportunity for recognition, which results in only short-term actions aimed at gaining attention, rather than implementing a long-term strategy to address the issue or prepare for future occurrences. This reactive approach leaves little room for sustainable solutions. Furthermore, there is a significant lack of coordination between different branches of government, which impedes the development of unified plans. Additionally, the process for releasing funds is notoriously slow, further hindering timely responses and effective action.

## Government's point of view.

### Police Department:

The government strongly criticized the police for their excessive use of violence, which escalated

tensions and created unnecessary chaos on the ground. Their reluctance to assist during the initial stages of the operation, driven by ego and a desire to assert dominance, was deemed unacceptable and counterproductive. Despite their eventual efforts to control the mob, their approach marred the operation's overall effectiveness.

### **Forest Department:**

The government noted delays in decision-making and criticized the Forest Department for reacting only after the chaos erupted. Proactive measures could have prevented the situation from escalating. Although the department's efforts were eventually effective, their lack of foresight in addressing the root causes beforehand was highlighted as a major shortfall.

### **Media:**

The media faced harsh criticism for sensationalizing the issue and using it to boost their public reach. By spreading misinformation, including false narratives about the Forest Department prioritizing wildlife over human safety, the media contributed to panic and mistrust among the public. The government emphasized the importance of media responsibility in such crises, urging them to adopt a neutral stance and focus on supporting public welfare and government efforts.

### **NGOs:**

While NGOs played a crucial role in community awareness and operational support, their overemphasis on species protection at the expense of human concerns drew criticism. The government stressed the need for a balanced approach that considers both ecological and human priorities.

### **Scientific Community:**

The government demanded an explanation from the scientific community for their apparent negligence in monitoring wolf populations and behaviour, which allowed the situation to spiral out of control. Their lack of preventive measures was identified

as a significant contributor to the escalation. The government urged scientists to prioritize detailed studies on wildlife behaviour and ecological dynamics to prevent such crises in the future

### **RHATC Team involved**

Villagers: Mohsin and Koshik

Forest Department: Sidharthan and Poojitha

Police: Priya and Ananditha

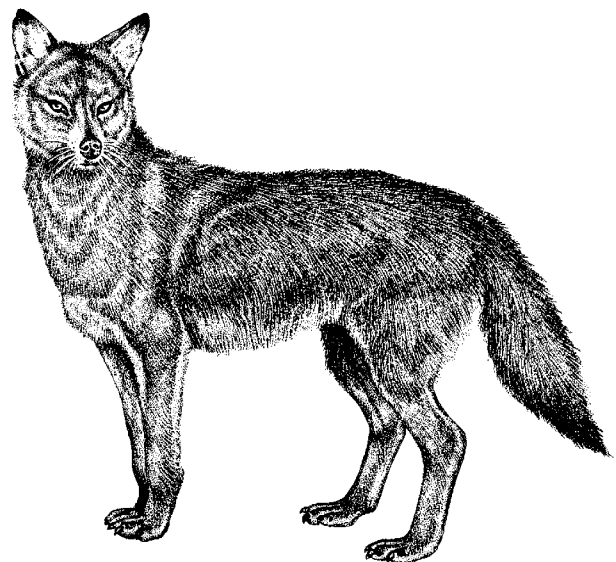
NGO: Diya and Shivangi

Journalists: Zeal and Himangshu

Government: Mohsin, Koshik, Sidharthan, Himangshu and Poojitha

Scientists: Zeal, Diya, Priya, Ananditha and Shivangi

COORDINATED BY: DR MEENA VENKATARAMAN



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