

Ram Hattikudur Advanced Training in Conservation 2025–26 (Batch 5)

A community of career conservationists to lead the world into restoring wildlife

Background

Global biodiversity is at a tipping point with species vanishing and ecosystems degrading, making it an urgent need to build conservation leaders.

The RHATC Program, a brainchild of Dr Sanjay Molur, stepped into its 5th year in 2025, is designed to provide young aspirants and early-career conservationists a unique platform to learn, engage with leaders, and exchange ideas in the field of conservation. The course provides a unique blend of contemporary conservation biology, science, philosophy, finance, policy, outreach along with equipping the participants with on-ground knowledge, tools, and perspectives needed to address real world conservation challenges while being inclusive, holistic, and scientific.

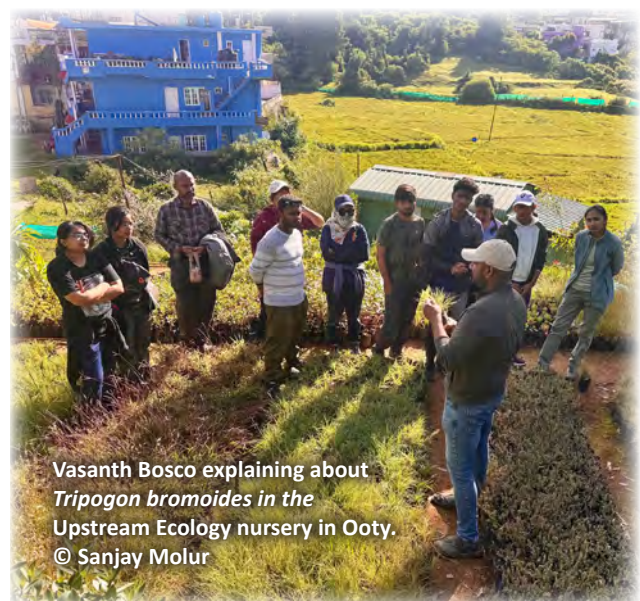
With an alumnus of 49 graduates from 13 states in India, the theme for the fifth Batch was Ecological Restoration where the Fellows underwent training on planning restoration models alongside conservation. RHATC is one of a kind course combining scientific expertise, grassroot engagement, and innovative thinking. The four-month inhouse immersive program is designed to equip conservation enthusiasts with on-field skills from experts across the globe.

Activities conducted during the reporting period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

- The RHATC team interviewed youth from different parts of India to select applicants that fit the fellowship.
- The team conducted sessions for the

Fellows on conservation biology, education & outreach, publication & research ethics, taxonomy, conservation assessment and planning, flora and fauna conservation, restoration, wildlife law & policy, scientific writing, fundraising, and other aspects of conservation.

- The Fellows were taken to field trips across the four months for hands-on training and field exposure to learn from experts.
- The Fellows were trained in scientific and popular writing for conservation and given the opportunity to publish.
- The team invited mentors, leaders, experts, and researchers from across India and abroad to train the Fellows in Conservation.





Examining a spiderweb on the crest trail in Coorg. © Sanjana V.K.

Challenges faced

- Making the younger generation understand the importance of responsibility and sticking to promises made during the selection process.

Participant numbers and locations

- The program supported nine Fellows from seven states during the 5th batch of RHATC.

Key partnerships and collaborations

- The program partnered and collaborated with 109 resource people, mentors, leaders, field contacts, experts, and funders from 37 organizations across the 4-months.

Key achievements and outcomes

- The program successfully ended the fifth batch with nine graduates from seven states.
- More than 60% of the graduates are already working in the field of conservation across different landscapes in India.
- The Fellows published a special edition for Zoo's Print, an international conservation magazine.
- The Fellows completed a 15-day mentorship challenge across three locations – lateritic plateaus at Kasargod, deciduous forests at Annamalai, and rocky outcrops at Tumkur; coming up with detailed project reports on restoring each of these landscapes.

Measurable outcomes

- The team organized 100+ sessions led by 109 resource people for the Fellows.
- The course organized 20 field trips across different landscapes and ecosystems in southern India.
- Five graduates are working in conservation and research positions with different government institutes and NGOs across India.
- Three detailed project reports for eco-



Exploring a hill stream at twilight in Coorg. © Sanjay Molur



Fireflies sparkling around Iyal farm in Pollachi. © Gokul K



Interaction with Srinivasan Kasinathan from NCF Annamalai restoration project in Valparai. © Trisa Bhattacharjee



Group photo with the Rainforest Retreat team in Coorg. © Sanjay Molur

restoration of three landscapes produced.

- 28 articles published in Zoo's Print magazine.

Acknowledgments

The RHATC team is grateful to: all the funders and supporters – Coromandel International (Murugappa Group), Mansukhani Family, Chandrakala and Satwady Govardhan Shetty, and Sanjay Manohar Family & Friends; all the research institutes, NGOs, and individual researchers who collaborated throughout the course for sessions, mentorship, and field trips; and the admin team back at Zooreach for all their efforts and support.



RHATC team after plantation in Ooty. © Sanjay Molur



Discussion with Joss Brooks at Pitchandikulam Library. © G. Pannagasri



RHATC Fellows with Zooreach Team at the office.

Future plans/next steps

After successfully completing five batches, the RHATC team is now working towards launching a one-year internship-cum-training program as an extended pathway of RHATC, designed to deepen learning and provide more immersive conservation experience. Stay tuned for what's coming next!

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Citation: Bhattacharjee, T., P. Molur, P. Iyer, L. Ravikumar, P. Kritika, B. Ravichandran & S. Molur (2026). Ram Hattikudur Advanced Training in Conservation 2025–26 (Batch 5). Zooreach Annual Report 2025–26. In: *Zoo's Print* 41(3): 18–21.

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