

Conservation Planning Specialist Group – RRC South Asia



Background

Zooreach has been hosting the South Asian Conservation Planning Specialist Group (the then Conservation Breeding Specialist Group) since the 1990s. And as a regional centre, Zooreach conducts species conservation plans (single species and/or multispecies) in different part of India and/or other South Asian countries.

This year two conservation planning workshops were conducted. One conservation plan was developed on six species of small wild cats of Assam and one on the Assam Roofed Turtle. In addition, a facilitated workshop to develop a coalition of snake conservationists was organized.

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

- ✦ Preplanning for the workshops through regular meetings with the host organization and guiding them on the data required for the planning process on the different species, relevant stakeholder lists, and introducing them to the planning process.
- ✦ Facilitating the conservation plans through workshops in Guwahati, Assam on the six species of small wild cats and the Assam Roofed Turtle.
- ✦ Guiding the host organization to write up

the reports and supporting them with the whole process.

- ✦ Developing the Monitoring and Evaluation model.
- ✦ Scoping Workshop to bring all stakeholders of snakes in the Western Ghats was conducted.
- ✦ Rescue Lab to discuss evidence-based approach to handling and rescuing snakes

Key achievements and outcomes

- ✦ A Species Management Plan developed for the lesser known and often neglected six species of small wild cats in Assam.
- ✦ A Species Management Plan developed for the lesser known and misunderstood Assam Roofed Turtle in Assam.
- ✦ Establishment of the Snake Conservation Coalition of the Western Ghats.

Challenges faced

Lack of understanding of the conservation planning and facilitation process by some stakeholders with no exposure to the SMART and process design techniques.

Participant numbers and locations

There were approximately 120 participants in all the four workshops put together. The conservation plan workshops were conducted in Guwahati, Assam and the snake workshops were conducted in Lonavala, Maharashtra and in Bangalore, Karnataka.



Participants of the small wild cats of Assam Species Management Plan Workshop.
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Working group in discussion at the small wild cats workshop. © Priyanka Iyer

Key partnerships and collaborations

For the conservation planning workshops, the host organization was Aaranyak and the project was supported by the Assam Forest Department, French Agency for Development, and Assam Project on Forest and Biodiversity Conservation. Collaborators included forest department officials, researchers, scientists, students, and community members who participated in the conservation planning process. For the snake workshops, Zooreach was the host organization supported by Upadhyaya Foundation and the collaborators included more than 25 organizations from around the Western Ghats range states.

Measurable outcomes

Conservation plans for these seven species was an extremely inclusive process with a



Working group discussing the existing initiatives in different protected areas and non-protected areas in Assam. © Priyanka Iyer

one plan approach that considered all the myriad threats faced by the species and aims to develop solutions. These solutions were also mapped to the various stakeholders depending on their role, capacity, and type/ extent of interaction with the species and its habitats. This also included specific timelines. In summary, the plan is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound, i.e., SMART goals and objectives assigned to the participating stakeholders.

The 25+ organizations supported Snake Conservation Coalition of the Western Ghats was established, several teams formed to tackle various focused topics, MoUs signed, Secretariat established, official website launched, preliminary funds raised for the Secretariat and workshops, and interviews to hire a coordinator underway.

Acknowledgments

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Future plans/next steps

Future plans are to develop conservation plans for other species such as snakes and invertebrates that are in dire need for conservation action in India.



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