

Interns and Volunteers Contributing to Conservation at Zooreach

Internships and volunteer engagements provide an important bridge between academic learning and real-world conservation practice. At the Zoo Outreach Organisation (Zooreach), interns and volunteers support ongoing conservation initiatives through research, outreach, documentation, and community engagement. Over the past months, several young contributors assisted in projects ranging from species conservation assessments to community-based conservation programme. The following interns contributed to different initiatives at Zooreach.

Nethra Prem

Duration: 17 May – 19 June (1 month) and 1–5 January (5 days)

Projects Associated With: Butterfly Red Listing; Human–Elephant Coexistence Project; Ocean Conservation Education and Action Network Initiative; Outreach Programme for Classrooms for Co-existence program, Ooty

During her internship, Nethra Prem contributed to multiple conservation programmes through research, content creation, outreach, and translation work. She assisted in research for the butterfly Red List assessments and prepared digital



Nethra Prem in the Classroom for Coexistence program at Ooty. © Payal Molur

illustrations for the “Magic of the Ocean” platform. She also translated perception data collected from communities for both the human–elephant coexistence project and the IOCEAN programme. In addition, she supported outreach activities by assisting in a two-day workshop conducted for students at the Ekalavya Tribal School in Ooty for the Classroom for Co-existence program.

Through this experience, she gained a deeper understanding of how to conduct systematic research and identify reliable sources of information. Working with community perception data also helped her appreciate the diversity of views within communities and the importance of carefully analysing information to extract meaningful insights. Reflecting on her experience, Nethra highlighted that effective conservation requires a combination of research, enforcement, and outreach. She noted that education plays a key role in addressing misconceptions and shaping environmentally responsible behaviour. She also observed that interactive methods such as games can be powerful communication tools, helping simplify complex environmental issues and making them engaging for communities.

Yadunandan Narendran

Duration: 1 week

Project Associated With: Human–Elephant Conflict Zone Transcriptions

Yadunandan Narendran contributed to the human–elephant coexistence project by translating audio recordings and perception data collected from communities living in conflict-prone areas. His work helped make local perspectives accessible for analysis and documentation.

Through this process, he gained insights into the complex relationships between



Yadunandan Narendran photographing wetland birds. © L.K. Shatrudhan

people and wildlife in regions affected by human–elephant conflict. Listening to firsthand experiences from local communities deepened his understanding of the challenges faced by people living alongside wildlife.

Reflecting on the experience, he emphasised the importance of involving local communities in conservation initiatives. Hearing community perspectives reinforced his belief that conservation efforts can be more effective when knowledge and action come directly from the people who coexist with wildlife on a daily basis.

Adarsh Jagadeeshwaran

Project Associated With: IUCN Red List Assessment for Endemic and Near-Endemic Butterflies of India

Adarsh Jagadeeshwaran supported the Red List assessment process for endemic and near-endemic butterflies of India. His work



Adarsh Jagadeeshwaran helping a local in setting up a plant protector in Chamba. © Amrin Ansari

involved collecting information from research publications and compiling data on species' habits, habitats, and distribution ranges, particularly for species belonging to the Papilionidae family and some Hesperidae. Through this work, he gained exposure to the research processes involved in butterfly conservation and learned how to identify relevant peer-reviewed scientific literature. He also observed the rigorous and detailed nature of Red List assessments, which require careful evaluation of available scientific evidence.

This experience highlighted for him the challenges of conducting species-level conservation research, especially for organisms that have limited habitat ranges or insufficient scientific documentation. He also noted that many butterfly species remain understudied, making it difficult to assess their conservation status accurately.

Akshaj Jayesh Gopal

Duration: 1 month

Programme Associated With: Biodiversity Surveys

As a volunteer, Akshaj Jayesh Gopal assisted in invertebrate surveys, supporting species identification and documentation efforts. His work involved observing and recording biodiversity while learning systematic methods for documenting wildlife. Through the survey process, he gained insights into the ecological impacts of



Akshaj Jayesh Gopal taking part in the invertebrate survey with Zooreach team. © Pannagasri G

invasive plant species and how they can outcompete native flora, subsequently affecting invertebrates and other wildlife. He also learned practical methods for species identification and discovered resources that could help deepen his understanding of local ecosystems.

Reflecting on the experience, he noted that the survey work provided a clearer understanding of ecological interconnectedness and human impacts on natural systems. The experience also highlighted the depth of research and careful analysis required even for basic biodiversity surveys. For him, volunteering helped reveal the role individuals can play in understanding and protecting the natural world.

Lakshya Raj Singh Rathore

Duration: 14 July 2025 – 13 July 2026

Project Associated With: Himalayan Restoration Project (HRP)

Lakshya Raj Singh Rathore supported the Himalayan Restoration Project by assisting with community coordination, restoration activities, and outreach initiatives. He worked closely with local communities, helping coordinate meetings, calls, and updates from daily wage workers and nursery staff involved in restoration efforts. He also contributed to seed collection, nursery management, and plantation activities as part of the project.



Lakshya Raj Singh Rathore taking part in the restoration activities in the HRP project.
© Amrin Ansari

In addition to field-related support, he assisted in preparing outreach materials, including educational presentations for schools and colleges and digital content such as Instagram posts. His contributions helped strengthen communication between the project team and local communities while also supporting awareness efforts around restoration work.

Through this experience, he gained practical knowledge about Himalayan terrain, native and non-native plant species, and the ecological challenges involved in restoration projects. He also learned about nursery management, seed treatment techniques, and the logistical aspects of plantation work. Reflecting on his experience, he noted that restoration projects involve complex challenges, including difficult terrain, limited resources, and the need for strong community engagement. He emphasised that respecting local customs and working closely with communities is essential for the long-term success of conservation initiative.

Encouraging the Next Generation of Conservationists

Interns and volunteers bring fresh perspectives, curiosity, and enthusiasm to conservation work. Their contributions from research and documentation to community engagement, play a meaningful role in supporting ongoing initiatives at Zooreach. Equally important, these experiences provide young participants with opportunities to understand the realities of conservation, appreciate the complexity of ecological challenges, and develop skills that will support future work in biodiversity conservation and environmental education.

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