

Editorial

The special issue dedicated to Dr. Ajith Kumar was a long time in the making, and the editors thank 18 authors for contributing seven articles to this issue. Dr. Ajith was one among a select few who was associated with almost all Indian higher education institutions of repute in wildlife biology and conservation. And as this special issue will show, he was much loved and left lasting legacies in all the institutions he graced with his presence.

The articles in this issue are varied in their style, structure and content, focused as they are on his stint at the Wildlife Institute of India (Kar-Gupta et al. 2026), one of two projects he was associated with in Sikkim (Acharya et al. 2026), his pioneering contributions to Indian primatology (Sushma et al. 2026), steering the Masters Program in Wildlife Biology and Conservation at the National Centre for Biological Sciences (Ramakrishna et al. 2026), mentoring the Indian marine mammal science community (Panicker et al. 2026), setting the stage for the Indian Wildlife Ecology Conference (Kumar 2026), and his diverse publications in a variety of mediums as documented in his bibliography (Pawar 2026).

Each article brings to the fore the unique qualities he embodied to make him a rare individual, quite like the Lion-tailed Macaques he studied. Over the course of a year, as we reached out to former students, colleagues and peers, new stories would emerge of his warmth, genuineness and caring. Some of the quotes and recollections by his students are quite telling, as they correspond to pivotal moments where Dr. Ajith guided them to take career shaping decisions.

We hope this is one among many attempts to document Dr. Ajith Kumar's rich legacy and the indelible mark he has left on wild places and people who were fortunate to meet him. On behalf of all the authors, we invite you to enjoy learning about what made Dr. Ajith Kumar a widely respected peer, much loved teacher, mentor and scientist.

This issue can be looked at as the start to another edition of Zoo's Print to be dedicated to Dr. Ajith Kumar's legacy to be published on 21 June 2026 with a special 'early online' version for the IWECC Conference. There are articles in the making and we encourage those of you interested to contribute to the next issue to look up the Call published in this issue and register.

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(Co-Editors of the Dr. Ajith Kumar Memorial Issue)