

Artist at SCCS Bengaluru

The Student Conference on Conservation Science (SCCS) is held annually in Bengaluru, bringing together students, researchers, conservationists, organizations, and wildlife enthusiasts from across the country. This year, I had the opportunity to be one of six artists invited to display my work at the conference and use art as a way to communicate my love for wildlife and conservation.

For the exhibition, I chose two main themes: **mushrooms** and **grassland species**. Using air-dry clay, I created a series of handmade pins and magnets featuring different species and elements of the natural world.

A major focus of my stall was on grassland birds. I referred to information from the *State of India's Birds* report to understand the population trends and habitat concerns associated with different species. Four



birds became the stars of my stall: the **Indian Coursier**, **Common Kestrel**, **Painted Sandgrouse**, and **Montagu's Harrier**. Through these artworks, I hoped to draw attention to grasslands as important natural ecosystems and to species that are often overlooked.

The mushroom-themed pins and magnets also became particularly popular among visitors. Alongside these, I displayed my **2027 Native Plant Calendar**, which features native plants from the open natural ecosystems and highlights the months in which their flowers bloom. Considerable research, time, and effort went into creating the calendar. Each month also carries a small personal memory or experience that I associate with the featured



plant, making it both a conservation resource and a record of my own journey of learning about plants. And then came everyone's favourite, the stickers! Most of them featured grassland species, with two special additions: a pair of Black Swans from Australia and a pair of Laysan Albatrosses from the Hawaiian Islands. These small artworks became an enjoyable way to introduce people to species.

While the artwork and products received a wonderful response, the most memorable part of SCCS was undoubtedly the people I met. The conference brought together so many individuals working in different areas of wildlife

research and conservation. There were NGOs, researchers, students, speakers sharing their knowledge, and presenters showcasing new discoveries and ongoing work through talks and posters. Every conversation opened the possibility of learning something new.

I also had the chance to meet many new people and reconnect with friends and colleagues, creating new connections and groups with whom I hope to continue learning and sharing ideas about wildlife and conservation. It was especially wonderful to meet fellow alumni from the **Ram Hattikudur Advanced Training in Conservation**, where we could catch up and learn about the different paths our work has taken since the training.

I am deeply grateful to Srinivasulu and Bhargavi for recognising and encouraging me to be a part of Zooreach and equally thankful to Sanjay, who has continuously encouraged me to keep creating, improving, and developing my skills.

Most importantly, I am grateful to the Zoo Outreach Organisation family for supporting me and giving me the space and confidence to pursue something I love.

For me, art is not just a creative pursuit. It is another way of **talking about wildlife, sharing knowledge, creating curiosity, and helping people connect with species and ecosystems**. SCCS gave me a wonderful opportunity to bring these two worlds, art and conservation, together.

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