

ZSI E-News

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from the Director's Desk

Cover: Asian Elephant, *Elephas maximus indicus*
Cuvier, 1798

Courtesy: ZSI/SRC, Chennai

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Dear Colleagues, Readers, Partners and Friends,

It gives me immense pleasure to announce the successful publication of February 2026 issue of the monthly e-news of the Zoological Survey of India. This e-news is a reflection of the scientific progress we have made and the institutional commitment to the exploration, identification, documentation, species discovery, and conservation of fauna across the country. This e-news is a reflection of the unwavering commitment of the scientists and researchers of the Zoological Survey of India to reveal the rich and diverse faunal heritage of the country. Through meticulous and thorough study of the fauna of the country, conducted through thorough field work across a variety of ecosystems, along with thorough taxonomic study, behavioral study, study of the species of threat and schedules, along with the study of the ecosystems of the country through various conservation strategies, we try to improve the understanding of the world we live in while contributing to the responsible management of the environment. Discovery of new species, identification of new faunal records, and formulation of new strategies for the conservation of species add to the scientific knowledge of the country. At the same time, they emphasize the responsibility we have towards the ecosystems we need to preserve to sustain the life.

The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) received the Swachhata Pakhwada 2025 Award in acknowledgment of its outstanding performance during Swachhata Pakhwada 2025. The award was conferred by Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh, the Hon'ble Union Minister of State for External Affairs; as well as Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, during the observance of World Wetlands Day 2026, which took place at Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary on 2nd February 2026. On 27th February 2026, a four-member delegation, led by Shri Nirupam Chakma, the Hon'ble Member of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST), visited the Zoological Survey of India in Kolkata, West Bengal. This visit aimed to assess the implementation of Constitutional Safeguards for Scheduled Tribes (ST) within the organization. On the same day, the Zoological Survey of India hosted the event "Green Leadership-Business for Biodiversity" to enhance awareness regarding biodiversity conservation and sustainable environmental practices. In the same month, scientists and researchers from ZSI documented a total of 1861 species of faunal communities across various ecosystems in India. This accomplishment includes the identification of two new species viz. one crab species and one polychaete worm species. Furthermore, new records for India were noted for one coleopteran insect species and one fish species.

I compliment all the contributors who have put in their hard work to make ZSI proud in every possible way. I strongly believe that this e-news will continue to be an essential medium for the dissemination of scientific information, collaboration, and awareness of the exceptional biodiversity of India.

I wish this initiative the best for its continued success.

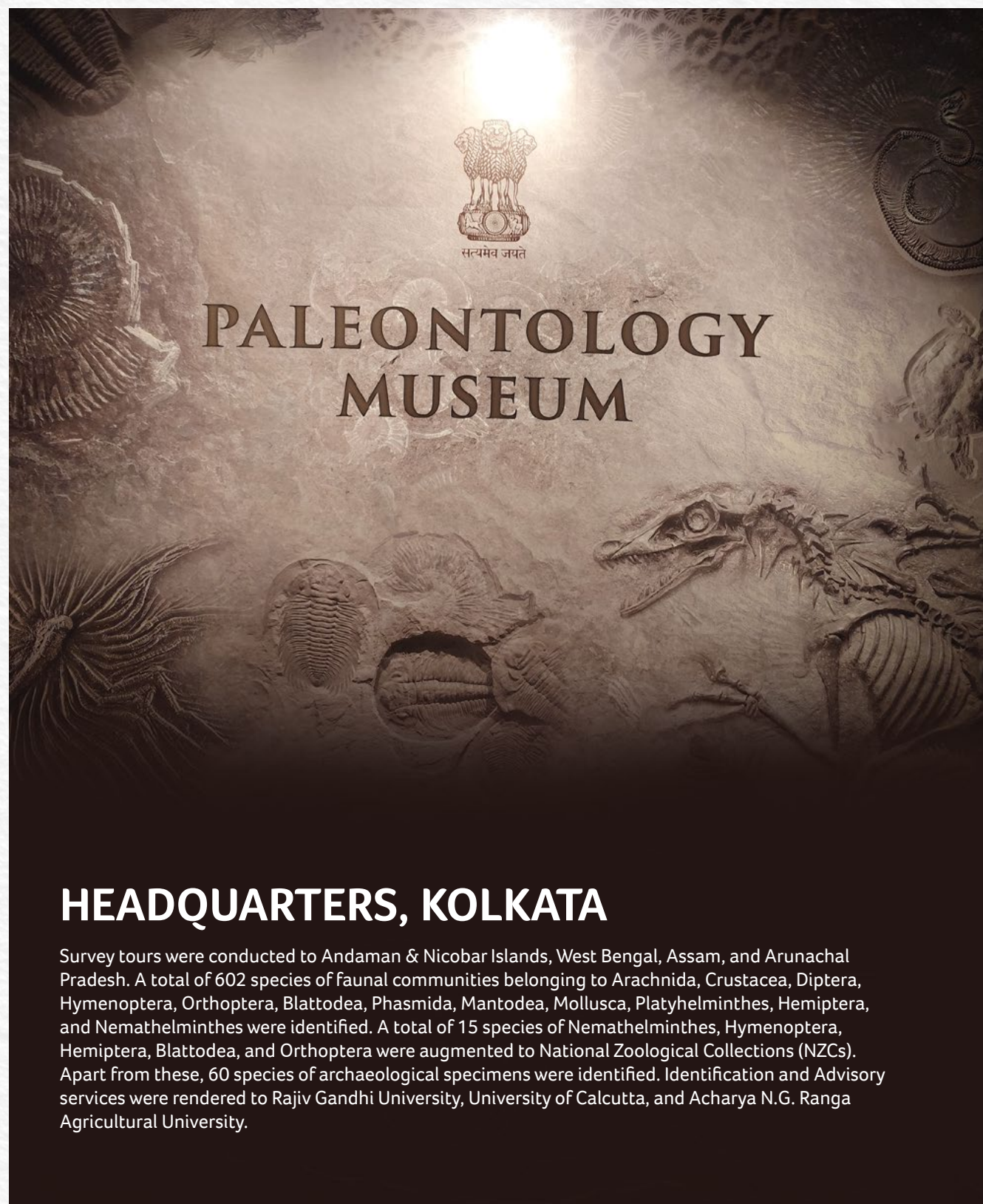
Jai Hind,

Dr. Dhriti Banerjee

Director

5th March 2026

Kolkata



HEADQUARTERS, KOLKATA

Survey tours were conducted to Andaman & Nicobar Islands, West Bengal, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh. A total of 602 species of faunal communities belonging to Arachnida, Crustacea, Diptera, Hymenoptera, Orthoptera, Blattodea, Phasmida, Mantodea, Mollusca, Platyhelminthes, Hemiptera, and Nemathelminthes were identified. A total of 15 species of Nemathelminthes, Hymenoptera, Hemiptera, Blattodea, and Orthoptera were augmented to National Zoological Collections (NZCs). Apart from these, 60 species of archaeological specimens were identified. Identification and Advisory services were rendered to Rajiv Gandhi University, University of Calcutta, and Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University.

Paleontology Museum at ZSI, HQ, Kolkata

NORTH EASTERN REGIONAL CENTRE, SHILLONG, MEGHALAYA

A survey tour was conducted to the Simsang River sub-basin, Garo hills, Meghalaya from 9th to 21st February 2026. A local survey was also conducted in Ri-Bhoi District, Meghalaya on 19th February 2026. A total of 116 species of faunal communities belonging to Araneae, Amphibia, Hemiptera, Orthoptera, Odonata, Lepidoptera, Decapoda, Reptilia, Chiroptera, and Pisces were identified. A total of 27 students along with 2 faculty members from Department of Biological Science, Aliah University, Kolkata, and 3 research scholars from Conservation Initiative, Shillong, visited the centre during this month. An interactive stall was set up by the centre at the *Ed Scientia* Science Fair exhibition on 26th February 2026 at St. Edmund's College.



ZSI/NERC stall at the *Ed Scientia* Science Fair exhibition



Aquatic collection during Meghna-Surma basin faunal survey

WESTERN REGIONAL CENTRE, PUNE, MAHARASHTRA

दिनांक 21.02.2026 को भारतीय प्राणी सर्वेक्षण, पश्चिमी प्रादेशिक केंद्र, पुणे में प्रस्तावित वेस्टर्न घाट्स फॉना रिपोर्टिरी, सभागार एवं संग्रहालय भवन के निर्माण हेतु आयोजित शिलान्यास समारोह का उद्घाटन भारतीय प्राणी सर्वेक्षण की निदेशक महोदया डॉ. धृति बनर्जी के द्वारा किया गया। Survey tour was conducted to Great Indian Bustard Wildlife Sanctuary, Solapur and Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary, Palghar, Maharashtra from 24th January to 1st February 2026. A total of 126 species of faunal communities belonging to Amphibia, Araneae, Blattodea, Crustacea, Coleoptera, Hymenoptera, Lepidoptera, Mammalia, Mollusca, Odonata, and Pisces were identified. One species of freshwater crab was described as new to science. A total of 11 DNA sequences have been submitted to NCBI. Identification and advisory services were rendered to three different educational institutions. A total of 2696 people visited the museum of the centre. नगर राजभाषा कार्यान्वयन समिति ने उत्कृष्ट राजभाषा कार्यान्वयन के लिए भारतीय प्राणी सर्वेक्षण, पश्चिमी प्रादेशिक केंद्र, पुणे (50 से कम कर्मचारियों वाला कार्यालय) को द्वितीय पुरस्कार से सम्मानित किया गया।



पश्चिमी प्रादेशिक केंद्र, पुणे को उत्कृष्ट राजभाषा कार्यान्वयन (वर्ष 2024-25) द्वितीय पुरस्कार



Pied Bushchat, *Saxicola caprata* (Linnaeus, 1766)



45 Forest Range Officers trainees from Gujarat visited the centre on 9th February 2026

CENTRAL ZONE REGIONAL CENTRE, JABALPUR, MADHYA PRADESH

Survey tours were conducted to Kanha National Park, Bandhavgarh National Park, Pench National Park, Fossil National Park, Veerangana Rani Durgawati Tiger Reserve, and Damoh, Madhya Pradesh during this month. A total of 183 species of faunal communities, including Lepidoptera, Orthoptera, Odonata, Hemiptera, Mollusca, and Pisces were identified. 84 visitors including 45 Forest Range Officers trainees from Gujarat and students from various institutes of Jabalpur visited the museum of the centre.



Anastomus oscitans (Boddaert, 1783), Asian openbill Stork at Kanha National Park

DESERT REGIONAL CENTRE, JODHPUR, RAJASTHAN

A total of 119 species of faunal communities belonging to Mollusca, Pisces, Reptilia, Coleoptera, Hymenoptera, Lepidoptera, Hemiptera, and Amphibia were identified. Identification and Advisory services were rendered to two different educational institutions. A total of 175 visitors including students of various educational institutions visited the museum of the centre. The office stall was awarded with 3rd position for the Best Stall Exhibition on 14th February 2026 in the Krishi Vigyan Mela-2026 (Agriculture Science Fair-2026) organized by Agriculture University Jodhpur, IFFCO, and the Agriculture Technology Management Agency. The office also participated in the "Kisan Mela" organized by ICAR-Central Arid Zone Research Institute, Jodhpur at CAZRI on 27th February 2026.



ZSI, DRC, Jodhpur Stall received third position at Agriculture University on 14th February 2026



Students of Unit International and Shri School visited Museum of DRC, ZSI, Jodhpur on 2nd February 2026



Pied Kingfisher, *Ceryle rudis* (Linnaeus, 1758)

NORTHERN REGIONAL CENTRE, DEHRADUN, UTTARAKHAND

A survey tour was conducted to the Upper Ganga River -RAMSAR site during this month. A total of 72 species of faunal communities belonging to Phthiraptera, Hemiptera, Lepidoptera, Diptera, Pisces, and Reptilia were identified. The Centre organized "Mission Life Programme- Save Water, Save Electricity, Cleanliness Drive", "Ek Ped Maa Kae Naam Campaign". World Wetland Day was celebrated with the students of 3 schools of Dehradun at Asan Conservation Reserve- RAMSAR site, Dehradun on 2nd February 2026.



Trainees LMCST, Jodhpur, of Capacity Building Hands-on-Training Workshop on Faunal Diversity of India

SOUTHERN REGIONAL CENTRE, CHENNAI, TAMIL NADU

Survey tours were conducted to the Western Ghats of Karnataka from 4th to 19th February 2026 and to Nemmara Forest Division, Palakkad, Kerala from 7th to 21st February 2026. A total of 111 species of faunal communities belonging to Crustacea, Ephemeroptera, Hemiptera, Lepidoptera, Odonata, Orthoptera, Psocoptera, Mollusca, Pisces, Amphibia, Reptilia, Aves, and zooplankton were identified. A total of 43 students from PSG college of Arts and Sciences, visited the entomology lab of the centre during this month.



Indian Jackal, *Canis aureus indicus* Hodgson, 1833



Taiga Flycatcher, *Ficedula albicilla* (Pallas, 1811)

GANGETIC PLAINS REGIONAL CENTRE, PATNA, BIHAR

Survey tour was conducted to Gaya District, Bihar from 21st to 26th February 2026. A total of 98 species of faunal communities belonging to Insecta, Mollusca, and Pisces were identified during this month.



Laughing dove, *Spilopelia senegalensis* (Linnaeus, 1766)

HIGH ALTITUDE REGIONAL CENTRE, SOLAN, HIMACHAL PRADESH

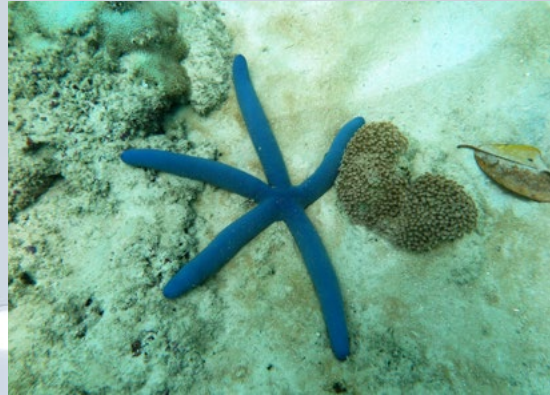
A local survey was conducted at Dr. Y.S. Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry, Nauni, Solan on 17th and 18th February 2026. A total of 56 species of faunal communities belonging to Hemiptera, Lepidoptera, Trichoptera, Orthoptera, Hymenoptera, and Fishes were identified during this month. A total of 3 DNA sequences has been submitted to NCBI. One Identification and Advisory Service was rendered to Carrier Point University, Himachal Pradesh. A total of 20 visitors visited the museum of the centre.



In-house Training on DNA Barcoding at ZSI/HARC, Solan

ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR REGIONAL CENTRE, SRI VIJAYA PURAM, ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

Two long-term surveys were conducted to Great Nicobar Island from 1st to 28th February 2026 and to North and Middle Andaman from 1st to 3rd February and 18th to 28th February 2026 to study the Marine and Terrestrial faunal diversity. Nine days local surveys were also conducted in South Andaman. A total of 315 species of faunal communities belonging to Annelida, Decapoda, Scapellomorpha, Fishes, Actinaria, Hydrozoa, Octocorallia, Scleractinia, Zoantharia, Echinodermata, Mollusca, Nematoda, Platyhelminthes, Porifera, Freshwater Fishes, Coleoptera, Hemiptera, Lepidoptera, Odonata, and Mammalia were identified.



Linckia laevigata (Linnaeus, 1758)



Inaugural Function of the National Science Day Workshop on 27th February 2026

SUNDERBAN REGIONAL CENTRE, CANNING, WEST BENGAL

A total of 69 species of faunal communities belonging to Arthropoda, Mollusca, and Chordata were identified. A total of 17 visitors visited the regional museum.

FRESHWATER BIOLOGY REGIONAL CENTRE, HYDERABAD, TELANGANA

A survey tour was conducted to Seshachalam Biosphere Reserve, Andhra Pradesh from 16th February to 3rd March 2026. A total of 117 species of faunal communities belonging to Fishes, Aquatic Coleoptera, Aquatic Hemiptera, Branchiopoda, Amphibia, and Mollusca were identified during this month. A total of 11 DNA sequences have been submitted to NCBI. World Wetland Day on the theme 'Wetlands and Traditional Knowledge: Celebrating Cultural Heritage' was observed by conducting drawing competitions and invited talks at the Centre on 2nd February 2026. 'Mission Life' and 'Swachhta Hi Seva Special Campaign 5.0' were conducted to generate awareness among people.



Pseudibis papillosa (Temminck, 1824)



Aegithina tiphia (Linnaeus, 1758)

WESTERN GHATS REGIONAL CENTRE, KOZHIKODE, KERALA

Survey tour was conducted to Periyar Tiger Reserve, Kerala from 31st January to 17th February 2026. A total of 101 species of faunal communities belonging to Testate Amoeba, Coleoptera, Hymenoptera, Dermaptera, Odonata, and Fishes were identified. Identification and advisory services was provided to Baithul Izza Arts & Science College, Narikuni, Kozhikode. Two exhibitions were organized by the centre at Devagiri CMI School, Kozhikode and Ramakrishna Mission Higher Secondary School, Meenchanda, Kozhikode during this month. A total of 980 visitors visited the museum of the centre.

Indian paradise flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi* (Linnaeus, 1758) (sub adult male)



Survey team at Periyar Tiger Reserve



Survey team Members at the Mahanadi River mangrove ecosystem

ESTUARINE BIOLOGY REGIONAL CENTRE, GOPALPUR-ON-SEA, ODISHA

One local survey tour was conducted to Mahanadi estuary during this month. A total of 198 species of different faunal communities were identified in this month. A total of 31 DNA barcodes were uploaded in NCBI database belonging to 10 species. Students of PM Shri V. V. Giri Government Training Secondary School, Berhampur, PM Shri SNP Govt. High School, Bhatakumarada, Purshottampur, Atomic Energy Central School, OSCOM, Ganjam, Odisha, had visited the museum of the centre.



Horseshoe crab mating observed in the Mahanadi Rivermouth Mangrove ecosystem

ARUNACHAL PRADESH REGIONAL CENTRE, ITANAGAR, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

One local survey tour was conducted to Yupia and Borum forest, Papum Pare district on 25th February 2026. A total of 128 species of faunal communities belonging to Orthoptera, Lepidoptera, Hemiptera, Hymenoptera, Pisces, and Mammals were identified.



Field survey tour to Borum Forest region



Minicoy Island Lakshadweep

MARINE AQUARIUM AND REGIONAL CENTRE, DIGHA, WEST BENGAL

Survey tours were conducted to Lakshadweep, West Bengal, and Odisha during this month. A total of 45 species of faunal communities belonging to Nematoda, Mollusca, Foraminifera, Crustacea, and Pisces were identified. A Species of Muddy Bristle Worm, *Paraleocrates indica* sp. nov. (Polychaeta: Hesionidae) was described as new to science. A total of 2489 visitors including students from different educational institutions visited the museum of the centre.



Students from Department of Zoology, Ramnagar College visited the centre

NEW DISCOVERIES

NEW SPECIES



Ghatiana dhritiarum Pati, Naik & Gouda, 2026



Paraleocrates indica Balakrishnan, Pradhan & Salazar, 2026

NEW RECORDS



Drombus key (Smith, 1947)

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BOOK CHAPTERS

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POPULAR ARTICLES

1. Mishra, S.S. and Mohapatra, A. 2026. The primary freshwater fishes of Odisha- An Overview. *JALAJA, ORFOTOA Newsletter IV*: 16-32.
2. Saikia, B. 2026. Sorry Pluto, but that's how science works. In: *The Meghalayan Express*. (Published on 17 February, 2026).

ABSTRACTS

1. Krishnaraj, S. and Balakrishnan, S. 2026. A preliminary study of some marine meiobenthic faunal groups of the Digha and adjacent areas, Bay of Bengal. World Ocean Science Congress 2026, 23rd – 26th February 2026, at CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography, Dona Paula, Goa, India, Pp. 90.
2. Mahanta, A., Roy, D. and Sundaray, J.K. 2026. A Food Security Perspective on Microplastic Contamination in an Economically Important Freshwater Teleost. World Ocean Science Congress 2026 (CSIR-NIO).
3. Manna, C. and Balakrishnan, S. 2026. A new species of free-living marine nematode of the genus *Cyathoshiva* (Chromadorida: Cyatholaimidae) from the Bay of Bengal. World Ocean Science Congress 2026, 23rd – 26th February 2026, at CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography, Dona Paula, Goa, India, Pp. 91.
4. Mohapatra, S. and Balakrishnan, S. 2026. Abundance and Diversity of Meiofauna as Bioindicators of Environmental Health in Coastal Ecosystems of the Bay of Bengal. World Ocean Science Congress 2026, 23rd – 26th February 2026, at CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography, Dona Paula, Goa, India, Pp. 88.

MEETINGS ATTENDED

1. Dr. Dhriti Banerjee, Director, ZSI, attended the World Wetland Day 2026 celebration at Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary on 2nd February 2026 and received the Swachhata

Pakhwada 2025 Award (Shield) in recognition of the ZSI's exemplary performance during Swachhata Pakhwada 2025; inaugurated the Annual Flower Show, based on Sustainability via the LIFE initiative highlighting a brand-new Rosarium with 248 unique cultivars, at Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Indian Botanic Garden (AJCBIG), Howrah, along with Prof. VMSR Murthy, Director, Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology (IIST) and other dignitaries on 3rd February 2026; was invited to attend the 45th Meeting of National Committee on Introduction of Exotic Aquatic Species into Indian Waters held on 3rd February 2026; attended the 9th India Biodiversity Meet (IBM 2026) - International Conference, as a Keynote speaker and delivered a Lecture at Certificate and Prize distribution ceremony on 4th February 2026, organized by Agricultural & Ecological research Unit & Human Genetics Unit, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata in Collaboration with Ratanlal Brahmachary Memorial Foundation & Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal; attended the 60th Meeting of the Executive Committee of Science City, Kolkata on 5th February 2026; was invited to the Meeting of the Standing Consultative Committee (SCC) under the chairmanship of the PCCF/HOD, Department of Forest and Wildlife in New Delhi on 6th February 2026 to discuss the proposal for removal and pruning of invasive species as per the approved Working Plan for NCT of Delhi; was invited to the Queen Elizabeth II Memorial Cup Reception at Lawns, Member's enclosure, Royal Calcutta Turf's Club on 6th February 2026; attended the NCSM (National Council of Science Museum) Meeting on 10th February 2026; led a meeting with Prof. Dipak Kumar Kar, Vice-Chancellor, Vidyasagar University to outline the roadmap for future collaborative research and academic exchange on 11th February 2026 and also delivered a compelling lecture on the pressing challenges of Climate Change, sparking vital dialogue on our environment; was

invited to the Meeting at ANIIDCO, Sri Vijaya Puram under the chairmanship of Managing Director, Andaman and Nicobar Islands Development Corporation LTD (ANIIDCO) to discuss various matters on 13th February 2026; attended the programme for laying the Foundation Stone of Annexed Building of Western Ghats Faunal Repository, Auditorium and Museum at Western Regional Centre, Zoological Survey of India, Pune on 20th February 2026 and also distributed training completion certificates to 17 trainees from Fergusson College at the Western Regional Centre (WRC), Pune; attended “Renaissance 2.0: Parliament of Enlightened Thoughts”, along with 4 other scientists of ZSI, on 24th February 2026 on the occasion of Platinum Jubilee celebration of IIT Kharagpur and Silver Jubilee celebration of the Boston Pledge, USA at IIT Research Park, Kolkata and also took part in the Panel Discussion, Plenary Session: Reimagining Education - Awakening the Whole Human Being, as one of the six National and International Panellists; attended the Valedictory Program of one-day Seminar organised by Paleozoology Section and EIACP on Green Leadership-Business for Biodiversity on 27th February 2026 in which almost 100 BBA students and faculties from IQ City World School of Business, Kolkata took part; welcomed and felicitated Shri Nirupam Chakma, Hon’ble Member National Commission for Scheduled Tribe (NCST) who visited Zoological Survey of India for review of Constitutional Safeguards for Scheduled Tribes (ST) of Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Kolkata, West Bengal on 27th February 2026; attended the Meeting of the High Powered Steering Committee(HSPC) of the National Institute for Research and Application of Natural Resources to Transform, Adapt and Build Resilience (NIRANTAR) at Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), Bhopal under the chairmanship of the Hon’ble Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change on 28th February 2026; attended the NBWL (National Board of Wild Life) Meeting under the chairmanship of the

- Hon’ble Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change on 28th February 2026 at Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), Bhopal.
2. Dr. C. Raghunathan, Scientist- F, ZSI/HQ, Kolkata, attended World Wetland Day 2026 programme at Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary, Delhi on 2nd February 2026; served as a Member in the interview board for recruitment of project personnel under Great Nicobar Island projects; submitted a reply for Rajya Sabha Provisionally Admitted Unstarred Parliament Question Diary No. U3259 to the Ministry; attended Tamil Nadu Climate Summit 4.0 at Chennai on 17th and 18th February 2026; served as a witness for wildlife cases at Chief Judicial Magistrate on 26th February 2026 at Sri Vijaya Puram; delivered a brief talk on “*Business and Biodiversity*’ in the Seminar on Green Leadership: Business for Biodiversity” organized by ZSI Headquarters on 27th February 2026; attended the NIRANTAR and Central Zoo Authority Meetings chaired by Hon’ble Minister, MoEFCC at IIFM, Bhopal on 28th February 2026.
 3. Dr. C. Sivaperuman, Scientist- F, ZSI/ANRC, Sri Vijaya Puram, attended year celebration of Thiyagi Narayanasamy Municipal Higher Secondary School held during 19th and 20th February 2026; attended the Two-day National Conference on One Health Synergy organized by Andaman Science Association & ICAR-Central Island Agricultural Research Institute, as Guest of Honour, during 25th and 26th February 2026, and delivered a lead talk on Biodiversity of Andaman & Nicobar Islands a molecular approach.
 4. Dr. Gaurav Sharma, Scientist- F, ZSI/NRC, Dehradun, participated in the *Animal Taxonomy Summit 2026 Preparation Plan Meeting* organized by ZSI/HQ, Kolkata through virtual mode on 4th February 2026; participated as External Member in the “*Evaluation Meeting of Working Management Plan of Uttarakhand Division*” held under the chairmanship of the PCCF (HoFF), Uttarakhand Forest Department, Dehradun

- through virtual mode on 5th February 2026; participated as External Member in the “*Standing Consultative Committee (SCC) of Forests & Wildlife, Delhi*” through virtual mode held under the chairmanship of the PCCF/ HOD, Department of Forests and Wildlife, New Delhi held in the Conference Hall of Vikas Bhawan, New Delhi on 6th February 2026; participated in the “*Uttar Pradesh State Board for Wildlife Meeting*” held under the Chairmanship of Hon’ble Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Shri Yogi Adityanath ji in the conference Hall of Hon’ble Chief Minister UP office, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh on 9th February 2026; participated as External Expert Member in the “*Uttarakhand State Biodiversity Board Meeting*” held under the Chairmanship of The Chairman, Uttarakhand Biodiversity Board, Dehradun through virtual mode on 9th February 2026; participated in the meeting on the “*Review of Rooftop Solar Works under PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSG –MBY)- Solarization of Central Government buildings in Uttarakhand*” through virtual mode held under the Chairmanship of Project Manager, NHPC Pvt. Ltd. on 18th February 2026.
5. Dr. V.D. Hegde, Scientist- F, ZSI/WGRC, Kozhikode, presented the report (through PPT) to the Research Recognition Committee on 20th February 2026 regarding the facilities available in the ZSI/WGRC for the renewal of recognition as a Research Centre of the University.
 6. Dr. K. A. Subramanian, Scientist- F, ZSI/ SRC, Chennai, attended Annual Research Seminar at Advanced Institute for Wildlife and Conservation at Chennai; attended Tamil Nadu Climate Summit at Chennai; attended Tamil Nadu State Wildlife Board meeting; attended Tamil Nadu State Sanding Board for Wildlife meeting.
 7. Dr. Jayasree Thilak, Scientist- F, ZSI/SRC, Chennai, attended the 13th Annual National Conference on “*Climate Change & Biodiversity Conservation*” organized by Environment & Social Welfare Society, Khajuraho, MP at Godavari Self-Employment Centre, Nahdora-Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, India on 1st and 2nd February 2026.
 8. Dr. Anil Kumar, Scientist- E, ZSI/GPRC, Patna, along with Dr. M. E. Hassan, Scientist- E and Dr. V.M. Sathish Kumar, Scientist- C, attended a meeting at Bihar Pollution Control Board to discuss water quality parameters of VGDS, Bhagalpur and also visited Bihar Biodiversity Board to discuss City faunal diversity assessment on 18th February 2026.
 9. Dr. S.D. Gurumayum, Scientist- E, ZSI/ APRC, Itanagar, attended an online talk on “*Electronic Waste in India*” on 13th February 2026 delivered by Dr. Anwesha Borthakur, Scientist, Technical University of Munich, Germany, organized by EIACP PC-Hub, DoEFCC, Government of Arunachal Pradesh.
 10. Smt. Ilona Kharkongor, Scientist-E, ZSI/ APRC, Itanagar, attended the State Research Advisory Committee meeting for Protected and Non-Protected Areas of Arunachal Pradesh, as a representative of ZSI, held on 27th February 2026, at the Office of PCCF (WL & BD), Itanagar, for granting research permission in Wildlife PAs and other Forest areas.
 11. Dr. P. S. Bhatnagar, Scientist- E, ZSI/CZRC, Jabalpur, attended the State Biodiversity Board Meeting of Chhattisgarh in presence of Honourable Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Shri Vishnu Deo Sai, at Raipur on 13th February 2026; attended the State Biodiversity Board Meeting of Madhya Pradesh in presence of Honourable Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Dr. Mohan Yadav at Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh on 16th February 2026.
 12. Dr. P.C. Pathania, Scientist-E, ZSI/HARC, Solan, attended the hearing before the Hon’ble National Green Tribunal at Faridkot House, Copernicus Marg, New Delhi (online mode) as deputed by the Director, ZSI, Kolkata on 26th February 2026.
 13. Dr. S. Balakrishnan, Scientist-E, ZSI/MARC, Digha, attended the discussion meeting

- regarding the MoU activities organized by the Department of Zoology, Vidyasagar University on 11th February 2026; attended special campaign, mission LiFE, CPWD related meeting conducted on 25th February 2026.
14. Dr. Basudev Tripathy Scientist- E, ZSI/WRC, Pune, participated and presented paper in the National Seminar on “*Advances in Biodiversity Conservation: Opportunities & Challenges*” in ABCOC-2026 on 24th and 25th February 2026, organized by P.G. Department of Botany and Zoology, Rajendra University, Odisha.
 15. Dr. A. S. Kalawate, Scientist- E, ZSI/WRC, Pune, attended a Meeting of the Technical Committee constituted for Evaluation and approval of Research Projects on 16th February 2026 and evaluated 13 projects in virtual mode organized by the PCCF (WI), Maharashtra State.
 16. Dr. Souvik Sen, Scientist- E, ZSI/HQ, Kolkata, attended two meetings with the faculty members of Dept. of Zoology, Vidyasagar University, West Bengal on 11th and 26th February 2026 for organizing one day National Seminar on 24th March 2026.
 17. Dr. N. Marimuthu, Scientist- E, ZSI/HQ, Kolkata, attended an online-meeting of the 30th Research Technical Committee meeting and presented One year Interim report of ZSI-Inhouse program entitled, “Spatial and temporal variability status of Scleractinian fauna of Palk Bay” on 16th February 2026 under the chairmanship of Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden (Wildlife), Tamil Nadu State Forest Department, Chennai.
 18. Dr. Tamal Mondal, Scientist- D, ZSI/HQ, Kolkata, provided comments on Import of Hunting Trophies, Rajya Sabha Questionnaire, Rajya Sabha questions as and when required provided detailed data on the ZSI - Animal Discovery from 2015 to 2024 as required for Ministry of Statistics & PI through ZSI/HQ; attended the Fourth meeting of the Technical Appraisal Committee (TAC) on Activities and Implementing project proposal on Parvati Arga Wetland under the Chairmanship of Joint Secretary, MoEFCC on 11th February 2026 virtually; attended a meeting on South Asia Coral Reef RLE Assessment with the IUCN team on 16th February 2026; attended Parliament of Enlightened Thoughts hosted by IIT Kharagpur in collaboration with The Boston Pledge (Silver Jubilee edition), to inaugurate “*Renaissance 2.0*” on 24th February 2026 along with Director, ZSI on invitation.
 19. Dr. Muhamed Jafer Palot, Scientist-C, ZSI/WGRC, Kozhikode, participated in a one-day workshop for the declaration of district species of Idukki at the Jilla Panchayat Hall, Painavu, Idukki, on 6th February 2026, organized by the Kerala State Biodiversity Board and the District Administration of Idukki; attended the Workshop on Ex-situ Conservation of Threatened Amphibians of Kerala at The High Range Club, Munnar, on 7th February 2026, organized by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and the Kerala Forests & Wildlife Department; attended a virtual meeting organized by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) on 9th February 2026 to review the status of equipment uploads on the I-STEM portal and to discuss hosting the Experience Learning Programme on Mission LiFE at research institutes/organizations under its administrative control; actively participated in the Multi-Stakeholder Consultation Meeting on Sustainable Small Dam Management & Conservation of Cantor’s Giant Softshell Turtle at the Divisional Forest Office, Vidyannagar, Kasaragod, on 21st February 2026, organized by the Kerala Forests & Wildlife Department in collaboration with the University of Miami and the Turtle Conservation Fund.
 20. Ms. Debashree Dam, Scientist- C, ZSI/HQ, Kolkata, attended and performed the inaugural invocation at the World Wetland day Celebrations 2026 and Swachhata Pakhwada 2025 Awards at New Delhi on 2nd February 2026 organised by MoEFCC; attended an interactive meeting with Zoology Department and lecture on Climate

Change by Director, ZSI at Vidyasagar University, Purba Medinipur on 11th February 2026; attended a one-day program titled “*Parliament of Enlightened Thoughts*” along with Dr. Dola Roy, Scientist- B, hosted by Indian Institute of Technology(IIT), Kharagpur in collaboration with The Boston Pledge, USA to inaugurate ‘*Renaissance 2.0*’ at IIT Kharagpur Research Park, New Town, Kolkata on 24th February 2026.

TRAININGS ORGANIZED

1. Paleozoology Section, ZSI/HQ, Kolkata in collaboration with EIACP Centre, ZSI organized a one-day seminar on “*Green Leadership-Business for Biodiversity*” for about 90 students and faculty of Management Graduates of IQ city United world school of Business, Kolkata at ZSI, HQ, Kolkata on 27th February 2026.
2. ZSI/ANRC, Sri Vijaya Puram, organized two-week Capacity Building Programme on “*Ride of the Wave Conservation: Protecting Turtle Nesting Sites and Promoting Responsible Tourism*” from 16th to 28th February 2026 for students, teachers, PRI & Fisherman of the A & N Islands; organized a Two-Day Workshop on “*Science and Technology for a Greener Future*” for the students and teachers of South Andaman, as part of celebration of the National Science Day on 27th and 28th February 2026.
3. ZSI/MARC, Digha, organized one day training programme entitled “*Coastal and Marine fauna diversity and conservation*” as part of the 7-day Refresher Course where 32 Forest and Deputy Forest Rangers along with the training officer visited the ZSI/MARC, Digha on 20th February 2026; organized One day training programme entitled “*Coastal and Marine fauna diversity and Schedule marine fauna*” on 13th February 2026 where 32 First Semester B.Sc. Zoology students, along with faculty members from the Zoology Department of Ramnagar College, visited the ZSI/MARC, and attended a one-day seminar program with three lecture sessions led by ZSI/MARC scientists; organized One day training programme entitled “*Coastal and Marine fauna diversity from Digha coast*” on 14th February 2026, where as a part of the Educational Tour and Nature camp program, a group of 11 B.Sc. Zoology, first semester students along with faculty from the Zoology department of Debra Thana Sahid Kshudiram Smriti Mahavidyalaya, Gangaramchak, Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal, by the Scientist team of MARC, Further, an interactive tour to National Zoological Collections and Marine Museum were organized to the participants.
4. ZSI/NRC, Dehradun, organized “*Capacity Building Hands-on-Training Workshop on Faunal Diversity of India*” for 16 M.Sc. students and Faculty of Lachoo Memorial College of Science and Technology, Jodhpur, 1 student of Uttaranchal University, Dehradun, and 5 scientific staff in the Conference Hall and laboratories of ZSI/NRC, Dehradun from 4th to 7th February 2026.
5. ZSI/CZRC, Jabalpur, organized a Training Programme for 45 Forest Rangers on 9th February 2026, where they were informed about Zoological Survey of India and its activities, along with the collection, preservation and identification techniques practiced and Museum specimens were exhibited to them during their visit to the centre.

LECTURES DELIVERED

1. Dr. C. Sivaperuman, Scientist- F, ZSI/ANRC, Sri Vijaya Puram, delivered a talk on “*An overview of Antarctica: A Journey through everlasting ice*” at the Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Centre (MMTTC) at Madurai Kamaraj University on 4th February 2026; delivered a talk on “An overview Biodiversity of Andaman and Nicobar Islands” to the press team of Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu on 14th and 15th February 2026; delivered lectures on different topics at SSM Arts & Science College, Dindigul, Tamil Nadu on 21st February 2026; delivered at talk on Biodiversity of Andaman

- and Nicobar Islands to the Forester trainees organized by the Forest Training Institute, Department of Environment & Forests, A & N Islands on 23rd February 2026; delivered at talk on Biodiversity of Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the M.Sc. (Wildlife Biology) students, Kerala Veterinary University, Wayanad on 17th February 2026; delivered at talk on “*Biodiversity of Andaman and Nicobar Islands*” in the two-day workshop on Science & Technology for a Greener Future as a part of celebration of National Science Day on 27th and 28th February 2026.
2. Dr. Gaurav Sharma, Scientist-F, ZSI/NRC, Dehradun, delivered two lectures on topic entitled “*Status of Faunal Diversity and efforts on their Conservation in India*” and “*Migratory Birds of India and role of Wetlands in India*” in the “*Capacity Building Hands-on-Training Workshop on Faunal Diversity of India*” to 16 M.Sc. students and Faculty of Lachoo Memorial College of Science and Technology, Jodhpur and students of Uttaranchal University, Dehradun in the Conference Hall of ZSI/NRC, Dehradun on 4th and 6th February 2026.
 3. Dr. Anil Mohapatra, Scientist-E, ZSI/EBRC, Gopalpur-on-Sea, delivered an invited talk on “*Marine fish taxonomy in India: Bridging classical taxonomy with modern tools*” as Chief speaker in the Namita Memorial Lecture on 11th February 2026 organized by Ravenshaw Zoologist Alumni Association (RAZAA) Department of Zoology, Ravenshaw University, Cuttack, Odisha; delivered an invited talk on “*Blue economy to Blue Balance: Biodiversity Conservation - Competing Priorities*” in National Conference on “*Coastal Ecosystems and Emerging Challenges (CEEC)*” at Centurion University of Technology and Management, Bhubaneswar, Odisha on 12th February 2026; delivered an invited talk on “*India’s Blue Economic Ambitions: Safeguarding Biodiversity in a Developing Ocean Economy*” in the National Seminar on Biodiversity Conservation: Opportunity and Challenges, Organized by Department of Botany and Zoology, Rajendra University, Balangir, Odisha on 24th February 2026.
 4. Dr. Anil Kumar, Scientist- E, ZSI/GPRC, Patna, delivered an invited talk on “*Birds of Gangetic Plains and impact of environmental pollution on their survival*” for Door Darshan, Patna Region on 18th February 2026.
 5. Dr. Deepa Jaiswal, Scientist-E, ZSI/FBRC, Hyderabad, delivered an invited talk on “*Hidden Diversity and New Insights into Aquatic beetles of Eastern Ghats*” in the workshop on ‘*Discerning the Eastern Ghats: From Genes to Landscapes*’ on 21st February 2026 at LaCONES, CCMB, Hyderabad.
 6. Dr. P. S. Bhatnagar, Scientist- E, ZSI/CZRC, Jabalpur, delivered a lecture on “*Zoological Survey of India and its organisational structure*” to 45 Forest Rangers of Gujarat Forest Department on 9th February 2026.
 7. Dr. Sanjay Paunikar, Scientist- E, ZSI/CZRC, Jabalpur, delivered a lecture on “*Insect diversity of Central India*” to 45 Forest Rangers of Gujarat Forest Department on 9th February 2026.
 8. Dr. S. Balakrishnan, Scientist-E, ZSI/MARC, Digha, delivered a lecture entitled “*Coastal and Marine fauna diversity and Schedule marine fauna*” on 13th February 2026 to the 32 First Semester B.Sc. Zoology students, along with faculty members from the Zoology Department of Ramnagar College; delivered a lecture entitled “*Coastal and Marine fauna diversity from Digha coast*” on 14th February 2026, as a part of the Educational Tour and Nature camp programme for 11 B.Sc. Zoology, first semester students along with faculty from the Zoology department of Debra Thana Sahid Kshudiram Smriti Mahavidyalaya, Gangaramchak, Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal; delivered a lecture entitled “*Coastal and Marine fauna diversity and conservation*” as part of the 7-day Refresher Course for 32 Forest and Deputy Forest Rangers on 20th February 2026; delivered a lecture as a resource person entitled “*Coastal & Marine ecosystems: Biomedical, biotechnology, biochemistry and*

- their prospectus*” organized by Bon Secours College for Women (Autonomous) Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India on 28th February 2026.
9. Dr. Anjum N. Rizvi, Scientist- E, ZSI/HQ, Kolkata, delivered a talk as keynote speaker on “*Soil nematodes: Useful tool for the biomonitoring of soil ecosystems*” at the International Conference on Integrated Biological Research held during 4th to 6th February 2026 at Dr. Harisingh Gour Central University, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, India and also served as chairperson for the panel discussion on Integrated Biological Research and also served as Judge of Oral session on Taxonomy and Systematics.
 10. Dr. Souvik Sen, Scientist- E, ZSI/HQ, Kolkata, delivered a key note address in the 9th India Biodiversity Meet (IBM 2026), organised by the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata on 2nd February 2026.
 11. Dr. A. S. Kalawate, Scientist- E, ZSI/WRC, Pune, delivered a Lecture on “*Illuminating the Dark: Integrated Taxonomy in Moth Biodiversity Studies*” as a Resource Person in the National Conference on “*Modern Trends in Zoological Research*”, held on 13th and 14th February 2026 organized by the Department of Zoology, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, in collaboration with the Society of Life Sciences, Satna (Madhya Pradesh).
 12. Dr. N. Marimuthu, Scientist- E, ZSI/HQ, Kolkata, delivered Keynote addresses on “*True corals: Systematics, Species Diversity and their predators in Indian Atoll Reefs*” in State Level Seminar on “*Recent Trends in Marine Biology*” at The Madura College, Madurai Kamaraj University on 17th February 2026 and on “*Blooms in Atoll Reef Ecosystem: Impacts on Benthic Habitat in India*” in National Level Workshop on “*GIS and Remote Sensing Techniques for Marine Resource Management*” at Syed Ammal Arts and Science College, Alagappa University on 19th February 2026.
 13. Dr. M.S. Pandher, Scientist-D, ZSI/HARC, Solan, delivered an invited talk entitled “*Importance of insects in Environment and their conservation*” at P.G. Government College for Girls, Sector 11, Chandigarh, on 4th February 2026.
 14. Dr. M. Karuthapandi, Scientist-D, ZSI/FBRC, Hyderabad, delivered a lecture on “*Conserving Health: Heritage and Habitat for Sustenance of Plants and animals*” on commemorating World Wildlife Day, a one-day seminar organized by St. Francis College for Women, Department of Zoology and Botany at Hyderabad on 7th February 2026.
 15. Dr. Aftab Ahmad, Scientist-D, ZSI/NRC, Dehradun, delivered lecture entitled “*Morphology and Identification of Phthirapteran species infesting birds and mammals*” to the participants in the Capacity Building Workshop on Faunal Diversity of India in the Conference Hall of ZSI/NRC, Dehradun on 5th February 2026.
 16. Dr. Muhamed Jafer Palot, Scientist-C, ZSI/WGRC, Kozhikode, attended the Dr. Shaju Thomas and Dr. Sasikala K. Joseph Endowment Lecture at the Postgraduate and Research Department of Zoology, Nirmala College (Autonomous), on 6th February 2026, and delivered an invited lecture on “*Faunal Wealth of Kerala in the Context of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 2022*”; participated in the Arts College Literature Festival 2026 (2nd Edition), themed “Beyond Boundaries: Interconnected Worlds” at Government Arts and Science College, Meenchanda, Kozhikode on 13th February 2026, and delivered talk on “*Animal Migration with Reference to Kerala*”; delivered a lecture on “*Importance of Wetlands*” to students of NSS College, Manjeri, at our Centre on 2nd February 2026 in connection with the World Wetlands Day celebrations; attended the Teachers’ Training Programme titled “*Parithisthikam*” and delivered a talk on “*Importance of Wetlands*” at Government Higher Secondary School, Kuttikattur, Kozhikode, on 16th February

2026 and the programme was organized by the Directorate of Environment and Climate Change (DoECC), Government of Kerala, in association with Darsanam Samskarika Vedi, Kozhikode.

17. Dr. Aditya Kapil Valiveti, Scientist-C, ZSI/MARC, Digha, delivered a lecture on "*Marine Biodiversity: Collection, Preservation, Identification and Scientific Nomenclature*" on 13th February 2026; delivered a lecture on "*Biodiversity Activities of ZSI and MARC: Collection, Preservation and Identification of Marine Fauna*" on 14th February 2026; delivered a lecture entitled "*Marine Biodiversity of West Bengal & Odisha*", on 20th February 2026; delivered a lecture on "*Marine Biodiversity and role of Aquariums and Museums in Highlighting the Marine faunal Biodiversity*" on 25th February 2026.
18. Ms. Debashree Dam, Scientist- C, ZSI/HQ, Kolkata, delivered a lecture on "*Activities and role of ZSI towards Environmental Sustainability*" as part of Green Leadership-Business for Biodiversity" for about 90 students and faculty of Management Graduates of IQ city United world school of Business, Kolkata at ZSI, HQ, Kolkata on 27th February 2026.
19. Dr. V.M. Sathish Kumar, Scientist- C, ZSI/GPRC, Patna, delivered an invited lecture on "*AI, Cybertaxonomy and Biocorders in the Context of Indian Faunal Diversity*" at the Virtual Seminar organized by Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai on 28th February 2026.
20. Dr. Vikram Delu, Scientist- B, ZSI/APRC, Itanagar, delivered a lecture on "*Insights into Wildlife Forensics: Molecular Identification and Trichotaxonomy*" at the workshop under the theme of "*Wildlife Conservation Tools and Technology*" held on 3rd February 2026 at the Department of Forestry, NERIST, Arunachal Pradesh.
21. Dr. Vasantha Kumar D, Scientist-B, ZSI/NRC, Dehradun, delivered lecture on "*Taxonomy and Biology of Gall midges (Diptera: Cecidomyiidae)*" to the participants in the Capacity Building Workshop on Faunal Diversity of India in the Conference Hall of ZSI/NRC, Dehradun on 5th February 2026.
22. Dr. Supriyo Dalui, Assistant Zoologist, ZSI/NRC, Dehradun delivered two lectures on topic entitled "*Conservation Genetics and Wildlife Forensics*" & "*Molecular DNA Taxonomy*" to the participants in the Capacity Building Workshop on Faunal Diversity of India in the Conference Hall of ZSI/NRC, Dehradun on 5th February 2026.
23. Sh. Bhaskar Saikia, Assistant Zoologist, ZSI/NERC, Shillong, delivered a lecture on the Natural History Science to the visiting students of Aliah University, Kolkata, on 2nd February 2026.

PHOTO GALLERY



Dr. Dhriti Banerjee, Director, ZSI received Swachhata Pakhwada Award from hon'ble Minister of MoEF&CC on World Wetland Day 2026 at New Delhi



ZSI along with NMHS and BSI, winners of Swachhata Pakhwada 2025 Award on World Wetland Day 2026 at New Delhi



Director ZSI visited AJCBIBG Howrah for Annual Flower show inauguration on 03.02.2026



Felicitation of Dr. Dhriti Banerjee, Director, ZSI at AJCBIBG Howrah on 03.02.2026



Director ZSI felicitated Shri Nirupam Chakma, Hon'ble Member, NCST on 27.02.2026



Director ZSI welcomed Hon'ble Member of NCST on 27.02.2026



Dr. Dhriti Banerjee along with other distinguished panelists at Renaissance 2.0 on 24.02.2026



Glimpse of the Renaissance 2.0 programme on 24.02.2026



Felicitations to Director, ZSI by Dr. Rajmohana K., Scientist-E of ZSI during the valedictory session of a one-day seminar organized by the Paleozoology Section and EIACP on Green Leadership-Business for Biodiversity on 27th February 2026



Director ZSI distributed certificates to the students attended the seminar



Director ZSI with the students and faculty of IQ City World School of Business, Kolkata



Felicitation to Director Madam by the Vidyasagar University Authority on 11th February 2026



Special Lecture by Dr. Dhriti Banerjee, Director ZSI at Vidyasagar University on 11th February 2026



Director ZSI along with the staffs and officials of WRC, ZSI on 20th February 2026



Felicitations of Director, ZSI by Dr. Basudev Tripathy Officer-in-charge, WRC, Pune on 20th February 2026



Foundation stone of Western Ghats Faunal Repository, Auditorium and Museum at WRC, ZSI was laid by Director ZSI on 20th February 2026

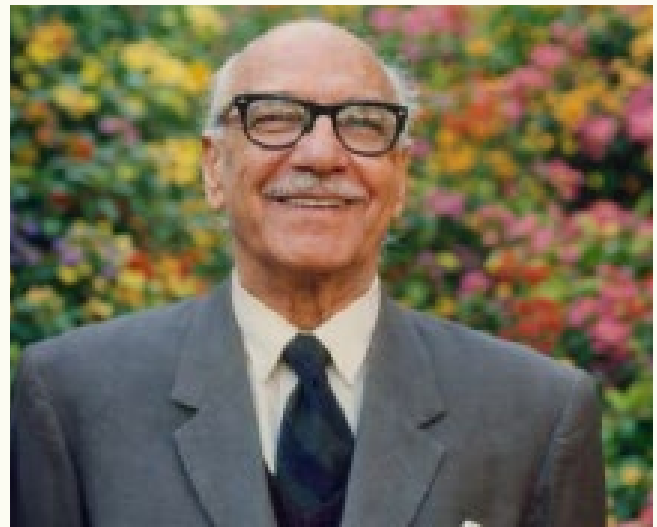
A Monumental Legacy in Indian Zoology: A Tribute to Dr. Mithan Lal Roonwal Former Director, Zoological Survey of India

by

Dr. K. Venkataraman

Former Director, ZSI; Former Secretary, NBA; Former Member Secretary LoEA

The history of zoological research in India is illuminated by the contributions of several stellar scientists, but few shine as brightly as Dr. Mithan Lal Roonwal, the 7th Director of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI). A man of extraordinary intellect, administrative grit, and a profound love for the natural world, Dr. Roonwal's life and work represent a bridge between the foundational era of the Survey and its modern expansion. His leadership transformed the ZSI from a modest institution into a powerhouse of faunal documentation, and his scientific discoveries—particularly in the realms of locust ecology and termite systematics—remain cornerstones of global entomology.



Early Life and Academic Brilliance

Born on 18th September 1908 in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, Mithan Lal Roonwal displayed an early aptitude for the natural sciences. He pursued his higher education at the University of Lucknow, obtaining his M.Sc. degree in 1930. His academic journey then led him to the prestigious Cambridge University, where he was conferred a Ph.D. in 1935, followed by a prestigious Sc.D. in 1962. These academic laurels from one of the world's most rigorous scientific institutions provided him with a solid foundation in experimental and systematic zoology.

Dr. Roonwal first joined the Zoological Survey of India in February 1939 as the Officer-in-Charge of the Bird and Mammal Section. Even in these early years, his dedication was evident. His bibliography from this period includes meticulous reports on bird collections from the Bengal Duars and the Tista Valley, as well as authoritative catalogues of the Indian Museum's pigeons and doves.

Scientist in Uniform: War Service and Scrub Typhus

The outbreak of the Second World War saw Dr. Roonwal trade his lab coat for a military uniform. Between July 1945 and June 1949, he served as a Major in the 5th Punjab Regiment of the Indian Land Forces in the South-East Asia War Theatre. His role was not merely combative; he rendered meritorious service as a mammalogist within the Scrub Typhus Research Team.

Operating with the South-East Asia Command, Dr. Roonwal carried out dangerous and essential field investigations in the Assam and Burma war fronts. His mission was to identify the mammalian “reservoirs” of scrub typhus (Tsutsugamushi disease), a malady that was a significant threat to troops in the region. The results of this pioneering work were eventually published in 1949 in the Transactions of the National Institute of Sciences of India, showcasing his ability to apply zoological expertise to critical public health crises.

The Visionary Director of ZSI (1956–1965)

In July 1956, Dr. Roonwal was appointed Director of the Zoological Survey of India, returning to the institution after a stint as Chief Research Officer at the Forest Research Institute (FRI) in Dehradun. His tenure as Director is often described as a period of unprecedented growth and structural revitalization.

Upon taking charge, Dr. Roonwal was faced with a department that was severely underfunded and overcrowded. He acted with a “dynamic, daring, and dedicated” spirit, fearlessly bringing the Survey’s needs to the attention of the Government. One of his most significant ideological contributions was his assertion that zoological collections obtained at the nation’s expense are the property of the nation. This principle helped establish the ZSI as the permanent guardian of what would become the National Zoological Collections, a repository that now houses millions of specimens.

the Second Five-Year Plan, Dr. Roonwal pushed for the decentralization and expansion of the Survey. At his urgent insistence, the government provided funds in 1958 to establish a network of regional stations to study India’s diverse ecological biotopes. These included: The Eastern Regional Station at Shillong (1959); The Western Regional Station at Poona (1959); The Central Regional Station at Jabalpur (1960); The Desert & Gangetic Plains Regional Station at Jodhpur (1960); The Northern Regional Station at Dehradun (1960); The Southern Regional Station at Madras (1961).

This expansion ensured that the Survey could conduct intensive field explorations across the length and breadth of the country. He also modernised the organizational structure by creating three new Divisions: Higher Chordata, Lower Chordata, and Lower Invertebrata, along with specialized sections for Animal Population Studies, Prehistoric Zoology, and Arachnida.

Scientific Laurels and Major Achievements

Dr. Roonwal was a prolific writer, with over 400 scientific papers and monographs to his credit, along with three books on pure and applied zoology. His scientific contributions are vast, but two areas stand out as his most enduring legacies: locust research and termite systematics.

The Desert Locust and the Eye-Stripe Hypothesis

Dr. Roonwal conducted extensive research on the embryology, population dynamics, and field ecology of the desert locust (*Schistocerca gregaria*). His most celebrated discovery in this field was the “eye-stripe” hypothesis. He proposed that the number of eye-stripes in a locust could serve as a reliable indicator of its phase (whether it was in its solitary or gregarious stage). This work was of immense practical importance for predicting and managing locust swarms. For this groundbreaking research, he was awarded the Tata Gold Medal in 1956.

The School of Termite Research

While at the Forest Research Institute and later during his tenure at ZSI, Dr. Roonwal established a world-renowned school of research on the systematics of termites (Isoptera). He spent decades meticulously documenting the termite fauna of the Indian subcontinent, describing numerous new species and providing comprehensive reviews of their biology and ecology. His work culminated in major publications like the first volume of the Fauna of India series on Isoptera, which he co-authored with O.B. Chhotani.

The Bibliographia Acrididiorum

In 1961, Dr. Roonwal published the “Bibliographia Acrididiorum,” a massive 600-page work that served as an essential reference for entomologists worldwide. This work, along with his monographs on various animal groups, exemplified his role as an “assiduous worker and a prolific writer”.

Dedication to ZSI and National Conservation

Dr. Roonwal's dedication to ZSI extended beyond administrative duties; he was a fierce advocate for the survey's role in national development and conservation. He served as the Secretary-General of the Indian Board for Wildlife, a body that advised the government on the preservation of India's magnificent but threatened wildlife.

He was also a pioneer in scientific education. In 1961, he organized and directed the First Summer School of Zoology in India, held at Shimla. This event was a landmark in Indian science, bringing together researchers from most of the country's universities to discuss recent advances in the field. Furthermore, he was instrumental in establishing the Indian Association of Systematic Zoology, serving as its President from 1957 to 1968.

A Wonderful Human: Integrity and Conviction

Beyond his academic and administrative titles, Dr. Roonwal was remembered by his colleagues and subordinates as a "wonderful human" with a character of "transparent sincerity". He was kind, affable, a man of conviction and a man of extreme conscientious.

His retirement from government service in August 1965 did not mark the end of his scientific journey. He continued to serve the scientific community as the Professor of Zoology and later the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Jodhpur. He remained an active researcher as a CSIR Emeritus Scientist until 1973, and even in his final years, he continued to pursue his studies at the ZSI Desert Regional Station in Jodhpur.

An Enduring Beacon

Dr. Mithan Lal Roonwal passed away in 1990, leaving behind a legacy that is literally etched into the landscape of Indian science through the regional stations he founded and the millions of specimens he worked to preserve. He was a man who saw no boundary between the rigors of the laboratory and the challenges of field exploration.

He was honored by numerous international bodies, being an honorary member of the All-Union Entomological Society of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and an honorary member of the Entomological Society of India. Yet, his greatest honor remains the thriving institution he left behind. Today, as ZSI continues to document the faunal wealth of India, it does so upon the sturdy foundation built by Dr. Roonwal—a scientist, a soldier, a leader, and above all, a tireless seeker of knowledge.

Presented with deep admiration for your exemplary stewardship of the Zoological Survey of India, transforming it into a beacon of taxonomic excellence, ecological insight, and national service. In grateful acknowledgment of your extraordinary vision, scholarship, and national service rendered through the Zoological Survey of India, leaving behind an indelible mark on the scientific and conservation history of India.