SACON News Vol. 17 (4) October – December 2020







©Gautam Kadam

Feature Article Image

SACON News October – December, 2020

Institutional Events

Wildlife Week 2020 Celebrations	1
Webinar talk by SACON Faculty at 'The Conservation Symposium', November 2020	1
Ambassadors of Nature Programme	2
World Fisheries Day Celebrations	3
Forest Owlet Conservation Action Plan Meeting	3
Constitution Day Celebrations	4
Online Workshop by SACON Faculty	5
Visit of Officer Trainees of Central Academy for State Forest Service, Coimbatore	5

Popular Articles

Exploring the 'tigers of microhabitats' in SACON Campus — By Gautam Kadam and Madhumita Rajkumar

Researcher's Corner— Art & Conservation

6

An Enthralling Moment! — By Priyanka Bansode	11
Nature and My Pencil — By Vaishnavi Sri K.T.	12

Cover Page Photograph Credits

Front: Orange Minivet ©Siddhesh Bhor

Back: Lesser Whitling-duck ©Sri Sowmiya M.



From the Director's Desk



A very warm New Year's greetings for 2021 to all the readers. The previous year was indeed a completely unpredictable and challenging year for all of us and I sincerely hope the coming year will bring a lot more stability to all our lives.

This October to December 2020 issue of SACON's newsletter covers various institutional activities, online participations, and a popular article on the spider diversity of SACON Campus. The commencement of the quarter was marked with the virtual celebration of Wildlife Week 2020. SACON Faculty also participated in national and international webinars and online workshops throughout the quarter. On the occasion of the 124th birth anniversary of Dr. Sálim Ali, we initiated a seven-week online Skill Development Programme titled "Ambassadors of Nature". A total of 16 children were selected from across the country and participated in various online mentoring sessions by our faculty on various taxa and field observational skills. SACON also organized a two-day virtual meeting to draft a Forest Owlet Conservation Action Plan. This meeting was attended by several stakeholders and the formulation of the plan was one of the main objectives of SACON's ongoing Forest Owlet Project funded by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India. With the relaxation in the COVID-19 protocols, 44 Officer Trainees from Central Academy for State Forest Service, Coimbatore visited SACON as part of their State Forest Service Course. This issue also brings a fascinating account of Spider Diversity of SACON Campus with a total of 80 species recorded by our researchers.

I hope you all have a good time reading this issue as I once again wish all our readers, faculty, staff, researchers, and students a very happy and a safe year ahead.

Dr. K. Sankar, Director



Wildlife Week 2020 Celebrations

As part of the wildlife week celebrations (2nd to 8th October), the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change hosted a series of presentations, and Dr. Shomita Mukherjee, Senior Principal Scientist, SACON delivered a talk titled "Small Cats and their Conservation in India". The presentation included details on the taxonomy of the Cat Family, the reason for India being so rich in cats, distribution of cat species in various biogeographic zones of

India, their morphological characters and how they are associated with habitat structure, the threats they face, issues related to land-use and cat conservation, potential ecosystem services provided by cats, the role of citizen science in generating information on small cats and some ideas on how they can be conserved.

In another 'Green' talk series organized by the Regional Museum of Natural History, Mysore, on 6th October 2020, Dr. H.N. Kumara, Principal Scientist, SACON gave a talk on issues of wildlife conservation through his experiences and case studies from Karnataka.

Webinar talk by SACON Faculty at 'The Conservation Symposium', November 2020

Conservation

2 TO 9 NOVEMBER 202

PROCEEDING

Dr. Riddhika Ramesh, Scientist from the Division of Environmental Impact Assessment, SACON, gave an oral presentation on "Long-term range dynamics of Cape parrot in response to climate and land cover change" at "The 2020" under the theme: Conservation Symposium "Conservation Approaches For Species Under Pressure", virtually held online between 2nd and 9th November 2020. The Symposium facilitated the development and exchange of ideas and lessons pertaining to contemporary conservation issues in Southern Africa. It was an effective platform for researchers to demonstrate the relevance of their work in addressing emerging or ongoing conservation issues, to identify new applied research opportunities, and provide training on statistical methods for conservation and monitoring.

The Symposium was organised by The Grassland Society of Southern Africa, hosted by The Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, and co-partnered by WildTrust, Endangered Wildlife Trust, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Environmental Law Association and The University of Zululand, South Africa. There were 75 oral presentations and 9 poster presentations under 12 thematic sessions covering a wide spectrum of conservation topics from terrestrial to marine ecosystems. Leading international keynote speakers, Prof. David Lindenmayer, renowned landscape ecologist from The Australian National University talked about "The Critical Role of Adaptive Monitoring in Conservation and Management of Reserves" and Prof. Barry Lovegrove from





es all obligate carnivore



À

the University of KwaZulu-Natal spoke about "30 years of change in arid zone conservation". Other plenaries by environmental law specialists, Prof. David Takacs, The University of California, spoke about "Biodiversity offsettings and environmental law" and Prof. Kees Bastmeijer, Tilburg University who specializes in water law, gave a "Legal perspective on Wilderness Conservation in the Anthropocene". There were interactive online statistical workshops on "Introduction to Data Analysis", "Hypothesis Testing", "Statistical Modelling Using R" and "Animal Movement Modelling Using R" which were conducted by Dr. Victoria Goodall, Senior Statistician from the University of the Witwatersrand. An interesting session on "Bioacoustics Collision" which explored the application of marine mammal acoustics in monitoring illegal activity for environmental protection had a keynote address by Dr. Tess Gridley, University of Stellenbosch who talked about "Acoustic communication in Humpback whales and Heaviside's dolphin and Dr. Anthony Hawkins, University of Bristol spoke about "The importance of sounds to fish".

Ambassadors of Nature Programme

On the occasion of the 124th birth anniversary of Dr. Sálim Ali, SACON initiated a nature education programme titled "Ambassadors of Nature"—a seven-week Skill Development Programme (12th November to 27th December 2020) for children across the country aged between 11 and 16 years on an online platform. The programme was formally launched on 15th November 2020 with the inaugural address of Dr. K. Sankar, Director, SACON. This programme was planned to develop a child's capability in investigating the natural outdoors including the wild flora and fauna through careful observation, systematic documentation of facts, analysis, and coming up with logical inference.



There were six weekly online mentoring sessions led by faculty members from SACON on the topics of their expertise:

- 1. Wonders of the Plant World by Dr. P. Pramod
- 2. Wonders in the lives of Birds by Dr. Rajah Jayapal
- 3. Wonders in the life of Butterflies by Dr. P. R. Arun
- 4. Wonders in the Life of Mammals by Dr. Shomita Mukherjee
- 5. Some unique ecosystems in our neighborhood by Dr. Aditi Mukherjee
- 6. The soundscape of Nature and Introduction to *eBird India* by Dr. P. Pramod

After each session, Dr. P. Pramod gave field assignments on (1) Observations on the diversity of plants, (2) Observations on the diversity of birds and their behavior, (3) Observations on the diversity of butterflies and their behavior, (4) Observations on mammals and their specific behavior and (5) Observations on some unique ecosystems in our neighborhood, and (6) Bird checklist on *eBird*. At the concluding session on 27th December 2020, the participants of the programme presented their experience of the programme and the outputs of their field assignments. Dr. K. Sankar, Director, SACON gave the valedictory address and Dr. P. Pramod, Principal Scientist, delivered the vote of thanks. All the technical sessions are available on SACON's YouTube channel @SACON Coimbatore.

🔻 World Fisheries Day Celebrations



World Fisheries Day is celebrated on 21st November every year throughout the world by the fisherfolk community to commemorate the rally undertaken by the small-scale fishers across the globe to address the issues related to the fishing industry. On the occasion of World Fisheries Day 2020, the SACON ENVIS team organized the following activities:

A

- 1. An animation film on the "Health benefits from consuming fish" for 30 seconds duration was prepared and released on social media.
- 2. A "Word Search" puzzle for SACON researchers was organized on 20th November 2020. The purpose of the game was to create awareness while finding out the hidden words of edible fish from inland and coastal waters. The researchers enthusiastically participated in the competition with an average completion time of 20 minutes.

During the prize distribution, Dr. Goldin Quadros, Principal Scientist & ENVIS coordinator, SACON appraised the researchers on the origin and importance of World FisheriesDay and its relevance to SACON. Dr. K. Sankar, Director, SACON, appreciating the event, spoke of the need to generate awareness among the Society about the importance of ecosystems and the role of flora and fauna, congratulated the SACON ENVIS team, and gave away the prizes to the winners and participation certificates to all the participants.

Forest Owlet Conservation Action Plan Meeting

SACON has been conducting a three-year-long study to develop a conservation action plan for the Forest Owlet, a species that is endemic to central India and is also globally endangered. This project is funded by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and (MoEFCC), Climate Change Government of India. As part of the project, SACON organized a meeting to draft a Forest Owlet Conservation Action Plan on 24th and 25th November 2020.



Given the existing conditions prevailing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was held on an online platform. Forty-six invitees from various backgrounds participated in the meeting and included researchers, ornithologists, conservation NGOs, forest managers from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, and representatives of local communities in the Forest Owlet range States.

À

The main objectives of the meeting were to share and consolidate collective knowledge on the ecology and conservation status of the Forest Owlet and to develop a framework document for the conservation of the species. While, Dr. Shomita Mukherjee, Senior Principal Scientist (Principal Investigator of the Project) welcomed the participants, Dr. K. Sankar, Director, SACON gave a brief on the background for conducting the workshop to the participants.

After the welcome address and the introductory session, there were a series of presentations on the distribution and ecology of the Forest Owlet by, Dr. Prachi Mehta, WRCS, Pune; Dr. Girish Jathar, BNHS; Mr. Dharmendra Patil, Jeevitnadi the Living River Foundation and Raintree Foundation, Pune; Mr. Jenis Patel, Research Scholar at NCF, Mysuru; Mr. Kaushal Patel; Mr. Sunil Lad, Owl Conservation Foundation, Mumbai; Dr. Pankaj Koparde, MIT- World Peace University, Pune and a team of JRBs and Project Assistant from SACON and IISER Tirupati on the current Forest Owlet Project — Mr. Vinay KL, Ms. Zainab Khan, Ms. Aditi Neema, and Ms. Amrutha Rajan. The talks spanned across more than a decade of research on the species and the information generated through these various projects and teams are crucial for understanding the status of the Forest Owlet across space and time, and will form the basis of the Conservation Plan.

The session on presentations was followed by a session on Red Listing, which was led by Dr. Rajah Jayapal, Senior Principal Scientist, SACON. Dr. Jayapal made a comprehensive presentation detailing the definitions of various criteria and categories used in the IUCN Red List and the kind of information required to update the Red List information for the species. This session highlighted the gaps in information on the species and consolidated the threats the species faces that are currently known. The take-home message was clear — there's a lot to be done vis-à-vis research but now we know where to focus our efforts.

The second day revolved around the prime objective of the meeting - the Conservation Action Plan for the Forest Owlet. The entire group was split into three sub-groups/themes — Research, Policy/Management, and Outreach and these meetings were conducted simultaneously, through the breakout rooms option on Zoom. Participants were assigned themes based on their expertise and they could request switching to other themes during the meetings. There were spirited discussions in each group and at the end of the session, the groups reconvened and presented their points to the general group. This consisted of the overall goal for that group, gaps in information or action, strategies to address the gaps, and actions required to implement the strategies. This was debated by the entire group to consolidate ideas that will now feed into the Conservation Action Plan.

Constitution Day Celebrations

SACON celebrated 'Constitution Day' on 26th November 2020. On the occasion, the staff of SACON joined the Hon'ble Prime Minister in the reading of the Preamble of the Constitution of India led by Dr. K. Sankar, Director, SACON. Dr. K. Sankar gave a talk on the sacred values and interesting factoids about the Indian Constitution, Fundamental Principles, and Meaning of Preamble and subsequently read the Preamble of the Constitution as the staff members followed. As part of the celebration, SACON conducted a cleanliness drive on the campus, and photos and videos of the events conducted by SACON were posted on social media with hashtag *#HumaraSamvidhanHumaraAbhiman* and hosted the related events on the website of SACON.

Online Workshop by SACON Faculty

The Association of Indian Primatologists conducted an online workshop for early-career primatologists from 7th to 11th December 2020. On the second day of the workshop, Dr. H. N. Kumara, Principal Scientist, SACON, gave a lecture on the population assessment and the methods employed for the assessment. He discussed the concepts of species distribution pattern, demography, basics of primate behavioral ecology, and introduced the methods and applications of primate population assessment. Dr. Kumara also conducted a hands-on workshop on the methods for occupancy and distribution of macaques using various analytical tools such as Presence, Density, and Distance software.



A

He used his case studies as an assignment for the participants and trained them in data analysis and interpretation of the results in an articulated manner. The workshop was very well received by the participants who gave overwhelmingly positive feedback for the session.

Visit of Officer Trainees of Central Academy for State Forest Service, Coimbatore

A total of 44 Officer Trainees from the States of Chhattisgarh, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Uttar Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu visited SACON on 9th December 2020 as part of their State Forest Service Course conducted by the Central Academy for State Forest Service, Coimbatore.

During the visit, Dr. P. Pramod, Principal Scientist briefed research activities of SACON to the Trainees, and Dr. S. Muralidharan, Senior Principal Scientist gave a talk on the ecotoxicological studies of SACON. Dr. Shomita Mukherjee, Senior Principal Scientist gave a lecture on the topic 'Conservation Genetics – A Primer' and Dr. P. R. Arun, Senior Principal Scientist explained the importance of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) studies and the crucial role played by SACON in conducting such EIA studies to give clearance to developmental projects.

In the concluding session, the Trainees were taken to SACON's Nature Trail where they were trained to identify several trees and shrubs species. They were also exposed to several natural spectacles such as termite mounds and keystone species like fig trees.







A

Exploring the '*tigers of microhabitats*' in SACON Campus

By Gautam Kadam and Madhumita Rajkumar

There is a classic saying that "small things can make a big difference" and it is indeed true for spiders. Though spiders are very small in their size, they are the most abundant insectivorous the terrestrial predators of ecosystem (Nyffeler, 2000). They have a very broad which includes appetite. predominantly insects, small birds, rodents, and fishes. They help in shaping the community by regulating the density of invertebrates, herbivores, and consequently predators, thus making them the 'tigers' of microhabitats. In India, so far 1,830 species from 470 genera and 60 families (Caleb & Sankaran 2020) have been recorded. Whereas in Tamil Nadu, 226 species from 120 genera and 33 families of spiders have been reported so far (Karthikeyani et al., 2017). Even though the SACON campus's flora and fauna have been systematically documented, not much has been reported about the spider diversity of the campus. This served as the motivation for our venture into the preparation of a primary checklist of spider diversity during our stay in the SACON campus. As our fieldwork on Sarus Crane Project got over in February 2020, we returned to our campus for writing the report. Incidentally, the Covid-19 pandemic struck and we decided to stay on campus since it was not safe to return home. Initially, we spent our free time bird watching in and around the campus. Then we gradually expanded our area of interest to other taxa such as arachnids and reptiles.

Correspondence: gautamkadam7wild@gmail.com; madhumitarajkumar@gmail.com Photo Credits – Gautam Kadam

The initial trigger was an intriguing encounter with Asianopis likuensis on the campus. A male spider was resting on the outside wall near the Ecotoxicology Laboratory. In a blink of an eye, the spider stretched a web across its front pairs of legs before launching itself forward and caught hold of a moth that was hovering nearby. It seemed as if a fisherman had cast a net in the water to catch fish. Later, based on a literature search and comparing the morphology, we confirmed it as a male A. likuensis. It is to be noted that this is one of the two species of the net-casting family Deinopidae that are found in India.

Our next interesting sighting was that of a trapdoor spider. As the name suggests, these spiders usually construct a burrow with a trapdoor made from a mixture of mud, vegetation, and spider silk. Being elusive burrowers and nocturnal hunters, they are difficult to sight. Nevertheless, the occasional showers in April made this possible. On a drizzly evening, we were cold-searching on the leaf litters near the parking area of the campus, and to our surprise, we encountered a stout, golden brown, medium-sized spider with downward-facing fangs. Looking at the fangs and other key features, we were quite convinced that we got to sight our first tarantula on the campus. Indian Spiders are majorly classified into two different infraorders based on the direction of striking fangs.

6

The infraorder Mygalomorphae consists of tarantulas that have fangs pointing downwards while the infraorder Araneomorphae consists of "true" spiders whose fangs point from side to center (diaxial) like that of the pincers. The Mvgalomorphae are considered to be primitive spiders that evolved during the Triassic period and are ambush predators. Even as our excitement of sighting the tarantula was unabated, two days later once again we sighted another male tarantula on the corridors of the Wetland Laboratory. Looking at the eye pattern and comb on the metatarsus we confirmed that both this and the earlier one belonged to the Genus Tigidia. There are 11 species of the genus Tigidia worldwide, of which four species are found in India. Apart from *Tigidia* sp., we also found the enchantingly beautiful and large-sized Haploclastus nilgirinus, Poecilotheria regalis, and Chilobrachys sp. The P. regalis is commonly known as Indian ornamental spiders and is popular with illegal pet traders, while the genus Haploclastus is known to be endemic to India.

While Mygalomorphs or Tarantulas are more primitive spiders that are endemic to a particular habitat and any change in habitat affects the species distribution, Araneomorphs are more adaptive and highly dispersive through the world. Thus one is most likely to encounter an araneomorph in daily life. Few of the most common species of Araneomorphs that every one of us would invariably have come across are jumping spiders (Salticidae), daddy long-legs spiders (Pholcidae), and huntsman spiders (Sparassidae). However, the sighting of a not so prevalent species, brown widow spider Latrodectus geometricus is quite a different story. In July, we were searching at the night in the car parking area, hoping that we could find another tarantula. To our surprise, we found an asymmetrically pyramidshaped web extending from the back tire of a



A

bike to the car parking platform. Since the structure of the web wasn't a familiar shape to us, we wanted to ascertain the species. On searching further, we found two spiked spherical egg sacs and a female whose ventral side of the abdomen had orange-red marking. That was our first record of the venomous brown widow. It is to be noted that except for the family Uloboridae, all other spiders have a venomous gland to kill their prey. The recorded spider *L. geometricus* is venomous to humans too and is invasive in India. It is the first record of the brown widow spider for Southern India. Earlier Kumar and Manju (2005) have recorded the presence of black widow L. hasselti in Coimbatore. Yet another invasive species, whose presence we have recorded on the campus, is the Rhomphaea projiciens.

À



Our most exciting finding was the enchanting spider Pandercetes or the lichen spider. On an evening, we were cold-searching for gecko on the bark of the Pongamia pinnata tree near the water hole behind the hostel. One of us (Gautam) found a gecko on one side of the tree and cautioned the other (Madhumita) to be aware of it if it comes her way. To our surprise, one of us (Madhumita) found something resembling a lichen moving on the bark. Upon closer inspection, what initially resembled "Davy Jones" from the movie Pirates of the Caribbean turned out to be a spider. The legs of the spider were long and were mimicking lichen. We were aware of a similar spider sighting posted recently in a social media group and we guessed it to be Pandercete sp. Upon searching for some literature, it was confirmed that the specimen was indeed Pandercete decipiens (Pocock, 1899). It was first described by Pocock in 1899 based on a female specimen. This genus belongs to the family Sparassidae, commonly called as huntsman spider because of its speedy hunting skills. So far, we have recorded five species of Sparassidae on the campus and we are hoping to record more. Apart from recording the spider diversity, we also had a chance to observe some of their interesting behaviour. One such interesting incident was the egg-laying behaviour of nursery web spider Euprosthenous ellioti. The nursery web spider was on the top of a shrub and was building its egg sac. Initially, it started building a platform or base for its sac. At first, we thought it was building an orb web, but later it intensified building its nest only at the centre of the web.

Latrodectus geometricus (Extreme Left) and Rhomphaea projiciens (Left)— Invasive species of spiders recorded at SACON Campus

Pandercete decipiens on Pongamia pinnata tree



After an hour, it looked as if a light-weighted white cup was placed on a hammock and a spider was lounging in the cup.

The nursery web spider closely resembles the wolf spider, differing only in the eye pattern. Wolf spiders are generally solitary and can be easily recognised at night by their sparkling eyes on the ground under a torchlight. Two major genera that are seen from this family are *Lycosa* and funnel-web spider *Hippasa*. For a wolf spider, there are two prominent posterior-median large eyes and other eyes are a little bit smaller in comparison. However, for the nursery web spider, all eight eyes are of similar size.

To summarize, a total of 80 species from 66 genera and 23 families and were recorded within just three months (Table 1). Our article is an attempt to describe the spider diversity of the SACON campus which could intrigue and create a community of SACON's arachnologists. We express our sincere thanks to Dr. K. Sankar, Director, SACON, and Dr. Goldin Quadros, Principal Scientist for helping us document the spiders.



Nursery web spider *Euprosthenous ellioti building* its nest (Extreme Left), and Purple sun bird using the web of social web spider *Stegodyphus sarasinorum* for constructing its nest (Left)

SACON

Table 1: Checklist of Spider diversity from the SACON campus recorded during August 2020

Sp. No.	Family	Genus	Species
1	,	Cyrtophora	cicatrosa
2		Cyrtophora	citricola
3		Poltys	sp.
4		Cyclosa	sp.
5		Neoscona	, bengalensis
6		Neoscona	punctigera
7		Neoscona	mukeriei
8		Nephilengys	malabarensis
9	1. Araneidae	Nephila	pilipes
10		Gasteracantha	aerminata
11		Herennia	multipuncta
12		Arajope	versicolor
13		Arajope	anasuia
14		Anepsion	maritatum
15		Thelacantha	sp.
16		Parawixia	dehaani
17		Menemerus	bivittatus
18		Myrmarachne	plataleoides
19		Myrmarachne	melanocephala
20		Phintella	vittata
21	1	Plexippus	paykulli
22	2. Salticidae	Telamonia	dimidiata
23		Brettus	cingulatus
24		Epeus	sp.
25		Bavia	sp.
26		Thiania	sp.
27		Rhene	flavicomans
28		Amyciaea	forticeps
29		Tmarus	sp.
30		Oxytate	virens
31	3. Thomisidae	Indoxysticus	minutus
32		Amyciaea	forticeps
33		Camaricus	sp.
34		Thomisus	lobosus
35		Haploclastus	nilgirinus
36		Poecilotheria	regalis
37	4. Theraphosidae	tigidia	rutilofronis
38		chilobrachyes	sp.
39		Plesiophrictus	sp.

A.

Sp. No.	Fami	ily	Genus	Species
40	· · ·	Hippasa	quadrifera	
41	1		lycosa	sp.
42	5.	Lycosidae	Wadicosa	sp.1
43	1		Wadicosa	sp.2
44	1		Pardosa	sp.3
45			Leucauge	decorata
46	1		Leucauge	sp.1
47	6.	Tetragnathidae	Opadometa	fastigata
48			Tetragnatha	mandibulata
49			Tylorida	sp.
50			Heteropoda	venatoria
51	1		Heteropoda	sp.1
52	7.	Sparassidae	Heteropoda	sp.2
53	1		Olios	milleti
54	1		Pandercetes	decipiens
55			Latrodectus	geometricus
56	1	-	Argyrodes	argentatus
57	8.	Theridiidae	Argyrodes	flavescens
58	1		Ariamnes	sp.
59			Oxyopes	javanus
60	1		Oxyopes	birmanicus
61	9.	Oxyopidae	Oxyopes	shweta
62			Hamadruas	sp.
63			Uloborus	sp.
64	64 10. Ulo	Uloboridae	Uloborus	sp.
65			Zosis	geniculata
66			Euprosthenops	ellioti
67	11.	Pisauridae	Dendrolycosa	gitae
68	1		Crossopriza	sp.
69	12.	Pholcidae	Pholcus	sp.
70	13.	Cheiracanthiidae	Cheiracanthium	sp.
71	14.	Corinnidae	Castianeira	sp.
72	15.	Eresidae	Stegodyphus	sarasinorum
73	16.	Hersilidae	Hersilia	savignyi
74	17.	Deinopidae	Asianopis	likuensis
75	18.	Zodariidae	hermippus	sp.
76	19.	Agelenidae	Agelena	inda
77	20.	Gnaphosidae	Poecilochroa	sp.
78	21.	Linyphiidae	Lynipha	sp
79	22.	Stenochilidae	Stenochilus	sp
80	23.	Ctenidae	Ctenus	cochinensis

References

Karthikeyani, R., Caleb, J.T.D., Gajbe, U.A., and Muthuchelian, K. (2017). Checklist of spiders (Arachnida: Araneae) of the state of Tamil Nadu, India. Munis Entomology & Zoology Journal, 12(1), 180-193.

Kumar, M.G., and Siliwal, M. (2005). Range extension of Latrodectus hasselti Thorell, 1870 (Araneae: Theridiidae). Zoos' Print Journal, 20(11), 2072.

Nyffeler, M. (2000). Ecological impact of spider predation: a critical assessment of Bristowe's and Turnbull's estimates. Bulletin of the British arachnological Society, 11(9), 367-373.

Pocock, R.I. (1899). Diagnoses of some new Indian Arachnida. Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society, 12, 744-753.

Sankaran, P.M., Caleb, J.T., and Sebastian, P.A. (2020). On the taxonomic validity of Indian ground spiders: III. Genus *Phaeocedus* Simon, 1893 (Araneae: Gnaphosidae). Journal of Natural History, 54(21-22), 1325-1336.

SACON News Vol 17(4), 2020

POPULAR ARTICLES

Researcher's Corner—Art & Conservation

An Enthralling Moment!

By Priyanka Bansode

Correspondence: priyankabansode02@gmail.com



I always feel privileged to have had a chance to stay in such a beautiful environment as the SACON Campus. Ever since I joined SACON, I was mostly deployed in the field and did not get much opportunity to explore our campus. Often I would hear from my friends endlessly raving about the beauty of the campus. Alas, the lockdown inflicted by the Covid-19 pandemic, gave me a great opportunity to know and understand nature closely as I was held up for the longest time in this mesmerizing place. Every day, I would observe the little squirrels, their mischiefs, squabbles for food along with the birds, their intriguing behaviour, and the activities of small reptiles around the hostel. Every evening a herd of chital deer would pass by and at times would halt and graze near my hostel room. They always seemed to be alert and very conscious of even the slightest movements. Sitting on my veranda with a hot cup of coffee and some engrossing book, I would often spend my evenings enjoying the company of these animals with their antics and calls. One evening I observed a deer herd grazing at a distance of about 30m from me. What caught my attention, however, was the sight of two little fawns struggling to suckle at their mother's teats. The tussle lasted for two minutes with the winner getting access to the milk. Even as the fawns were bickering over their right, the mother kept an eye on me all the while. I slowly got up, went inside, and grabbed my camera to capture this moment. I thought they might run away due to my movement but surprisingly the mother kept calm with alert ears. Perhaps she was accustomed to my presence every day and was not threatened and had certainly made my day by allowing me to click that beautiful moment before slowly moving away with her little fawns.

A

Researcher's Corner — Art & Conservation

Nature and My Pencil

By Vaishnavi Sri K.T.

Participant of SACON's Ambassadors of Nature Programme Age 16, PSBB Millennium School , Class 11, Somayampalayam, Coimbatore Correspondence: priyankabansode02@gmail.com

Like everyone, my hobbies include watching my natural surroundings and capturing some moments through my sketches. With the growing love of observing nature, I sketched bits of my surroundings using some techniques that I learned in my drawing class 4 years ago. Drawing my favourite birds, plants and animals is certainly a great stress-buster for me and I wish to continue to cultivate this habit even in the future too.















सालिम अली पक्षिविज्ञान एवं प्रकृतिविज्ञान केन्द Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History A Centre of Excellence under Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Govt. of India आनैकट्टी, कोयम्बत्तूर - 641 108 Anaikatty (Post), Coimbatore – 641 108 Tamil Nadu, INDIA Tele: +91 - 422-2203100, 109; Fax: +91 – 422 – 2203132 Website: www.sacon.in Email: salimali@sacon.in, salimalicentre@gmail.com



Editorial Board Dr. Aditi Mukherjee, Dr. T. Ramesh & Mr. R. Jayakumar Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editors or the Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History.



October – December 2020

Printed & Published by the Director, Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, Anaikatty (Post), Coimbatore– 641 108, Tamil Nadu, India