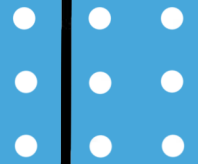




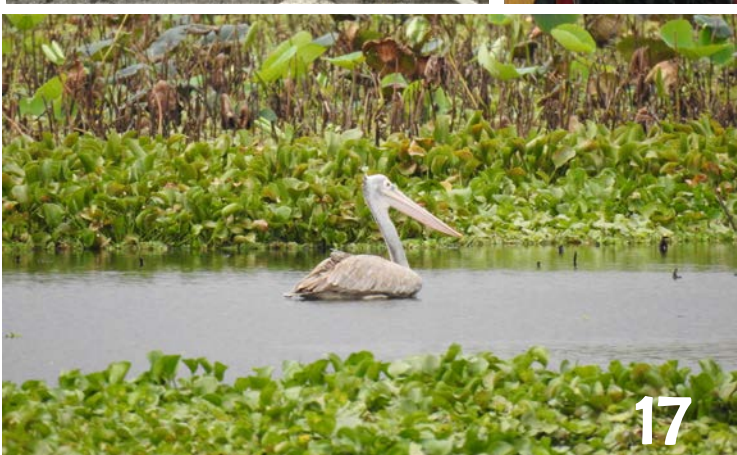
# SACON NEWS

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Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History,  
South India Centre of Wildlife Institute of India, Anaikatty,  
Coimbatore - 641 108, Tamil Nadu, India.



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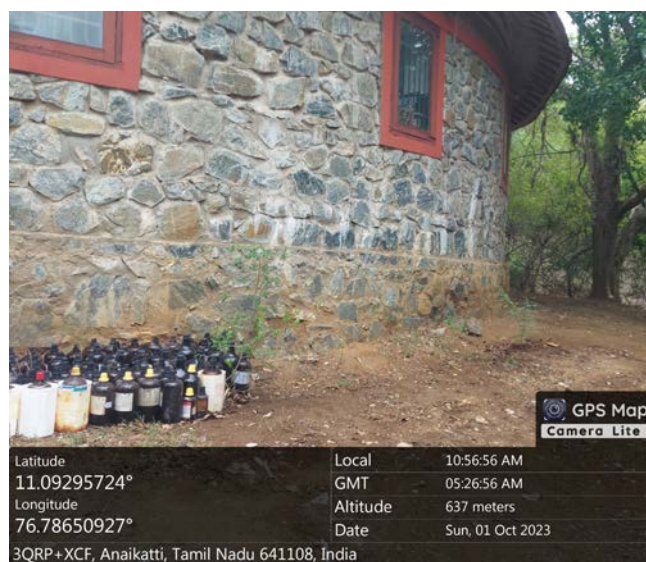
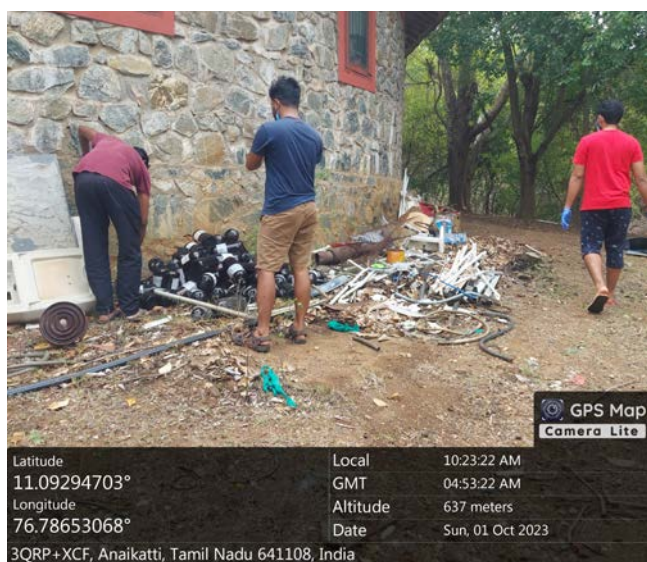
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# INSTITUTIONAL EVENTS

## Swachhata Campaign 3.0

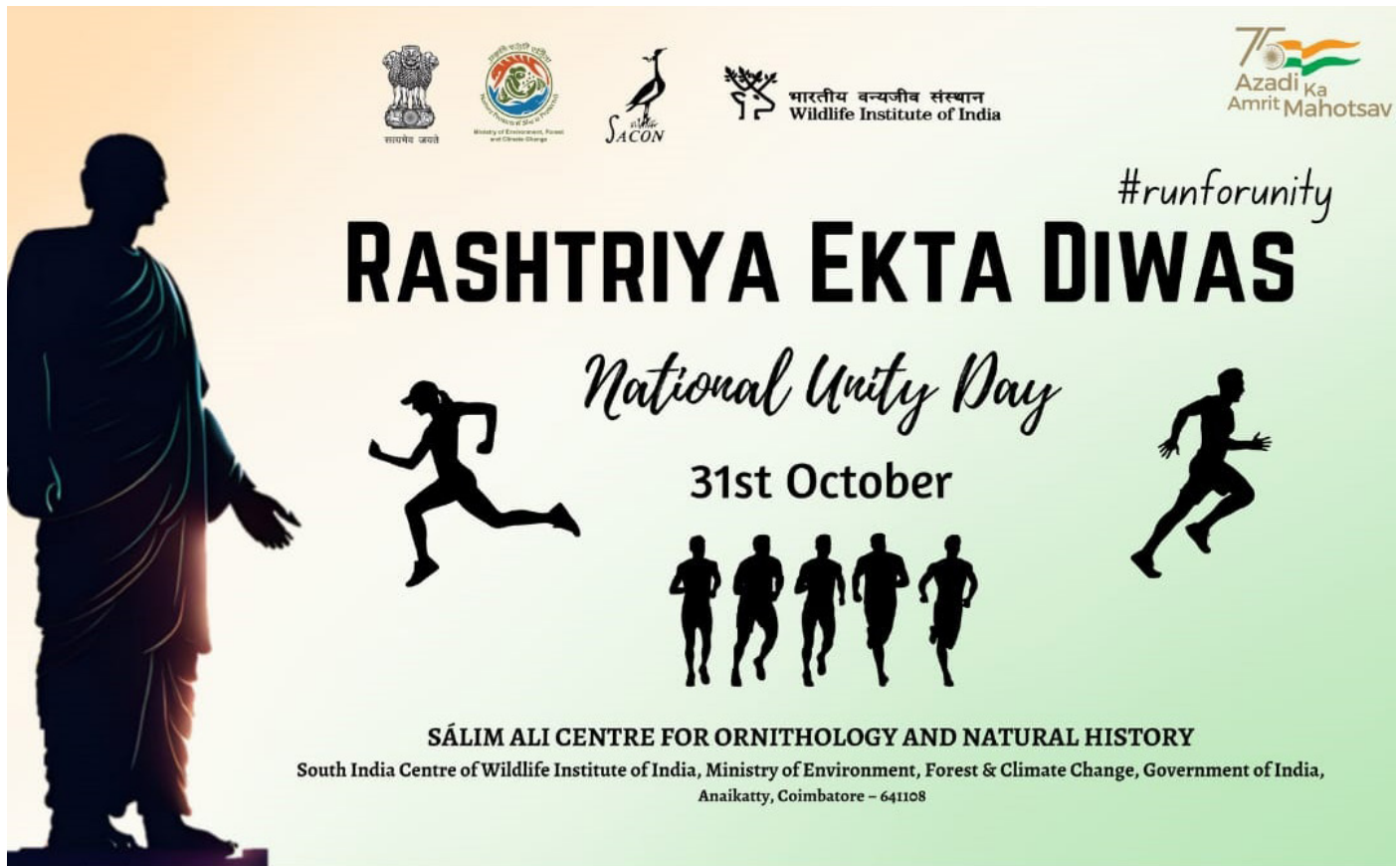
The cleanliness campaign, Swachhata 3.0, was carried out at SACON in two phases– Preparatory Phase from 14 to 30 September 2023 and Implementation Phase from 02 to 31 October 2023. Under this Swachhata Hi Sewa Program, "Shramdaan", i.e. a special cleanliness campaign, was organised at SACON on 01 October 2023. Students, researchers, staff and faculty members of SACON participated in the cleaning drive for which a certificate of appreciation was awarded to the institute. As a result of Swachhata 3.0, 402.5 kgs of scrap materials and 101 kgs of e-waste were identified and disposed of, generating nearly Rs. 50,000/- as revenue. This also includes the seven files weeded out as per the extant guidelines issued by the Govt. of India out of the 25 files identified for review.





## Rashtriya Ekta Diwas

To celebrate the spirit of oneness and honour Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, SACON took part in the Run For Unity initiative on 31 October 2023. As part of the occasion, everyone on the SACON campus took the 'Rashtriya Ekta Diwas' pledge.







## Visits by Government Officials

Thiru.V. Balakrishnan, I.P.S., Commissioner of Police, Coimbatore City and Mr. Kranthi Kumar Pati, I.A.S., District Collector of Coimbatore visited SACON on 18 November 2023 and 25 December 2023, respectively. They learned about the various projects at SACON, visited the Avian Forensics and Eco-toxicology lab, and went on a nature trail around the campus.







## *Indian Constitution Day Celebration*

Samvidhan Diwas, Constitutional Day (26 November 2023), was celebrated at SACON to commemorate the adoption of the Constitution of India. Documentaries on Samvidhan: The Making of the Constitution of India, a Rajya Sabha TV Creation, and Constitutional Values and Fundamentals of the Indian were showcased in Hindi, English and Tamil for SACON Faculty, Researchers, and Staff. SACONites and their families also took part in the online reading of the Preamble of the Constitution, for which certificates were awarded.





## *RHATC Visit*

The Ram Hattikudur Advanced Training in Conservation is a national-level four-month fellowship program that trains ten selected wildlife enthusiasts each year and gives them exposure to various fields of wildlife conservation. As earlier, the third batch of students was also brought to SACON for a two-day field visit on 20 & 21 December 2023. This visit was coordinated by Dr. H.N. Kumara, Principal Scientist, and Dr. Aditi Mukherjee, Scientist. This visit included interactions and lectures with various SACON Faculty and PhD Scholars, a visit to the various laboratories at SACON, and a nature trail. The visit concluded with an open discussion with Dr. H.N. Kumara about the various conservation issues and field challenges.





## Talks & Trainings by SACON Faculty & Researchers

1. Cave ecosystems are one of the most vulnerable ecosystems on planet Earth. SACON researcher Dhanusha Kawalkar (SRB & PhD Scholar) was invited by the Mumbai Tarun Bharat for a talk show (in Marathi) on the importance of sea caves on 08 October 2023. Dhanusha explained how important it is to document the biodiversity inside sea caves and how important their conservation is. She also briefly told the interviewer about SACON's exploration of sea caves in the Andaman Islands and the ongoing work on India Swiftlet (*Aerodramus unicolor*) in Vengurla rocks, Maharashtra funded by MoEF&CC.
2. Dr. Vidyadhar Atkore delivered an online talk on the Role of Conservation Organisations in Wildlife Management to Banda University on 27 October 2023.
3. Under the Political Science Programme of DD Kosambi School of Social Sciences and Behavioral Studies, Goa University, Dr. Vidyadhar Atkore gave an online guest talk on 31 October 2023 on the Effect of Environmental Variables on Freshwater Fishes.
4. Invited talk delivered at two-day National Seminar on Human-wildlife Conflict: The Way Ahead by Dr. P.R. Arun on 19 December 2023 organised by the Department of Zoology, Govt. Arts & Science College Calicut, Meenchanda, Kozhikode. The talk was titled "Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as a pre-emptive Tool for Conflict Mitigation".
5. Dr. P.V. Karunakaran delivered a talk on Community Conservation in India: A Case Study on Community Reserves of Meghalaya, organised by the Department of Botany, University of Calicut, along with the Gregor Mendel Foundation on 08 December 2023.



## ELACP Activities

### Wildlife Week Celebrations

To commemorate National Wildlife Week 2023 (2 to 8 of October), SACON ELACP PC RP (Programme Centre- Resource Partner) organised a Photography Competition on the theme "Geotag your Wetlands". This contest was organised as part of the Save Wetlands Campaign. E-certificates were provided to all the participants.

The ELACP team and the Extension Division of SACON organised a series of webinars to celebrate National Wildlife Week. This webinar series was based on the theme "Women in Wildlife", which involved seven female wildlife researchers from various parts of the country talking about their work in the field of wildlife conservation.

Date	Topic	Speaker
02/10/2023	Woodland to wetlands: Being an ornithologist	Dr. Madhumita Panigrahi Scientist-C, Wetlands Programme, Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)
03/10/2023	Restoration of grassland ecosystem by managing invasives: A success story from Manas World Heritage Site	Dr. Alolika Sinha Conservation Biologist, Aaranyak, Assam
04/10/2023	Shared resources and co-existence: Connecting dots in the ecosystem	Ms. Ajanta Dey Joint Secretary & Programme Director, Nature Environment & Wildlife Society (NEWS)
05/10/2023	Inner view vs Outer view: How an identity matters in wildlife conservation	Ms. Astha Chaudhary Independent researcher and Co-existence Fellow
06/10/2023	Connecting wildlife and Climate change through the local knowledge of Indigenous women	Ms. Bhavya George Programme Co-Ordinator, Climate Change Programme, Keystone Foundation
07/10/2023	Working as a woman, working with women	Dr. Ovee Thorat Independent researcher and consultant with projects involving livestock keepers and grasslands (Anthra), and nature-based learning (NCF)
08/10/2023	Empowering youth to conserve wildlife through research	Ms. Gayatri Nitin Pawar PhD Scholar, Shivaji University, Kolhapur





SACON held two group visits during Wildlife Week: one from Annai Sathya Arasu Kuzhanthaigal Nala Kaapagam in Coimbatore and another from the Forest Research Institute in Dehradun. In addition to walking on nature trails, visiting SACON facilities, and meeting with SACON scientists, both groups were made aware of National Wildlife Week 2023.





## South Zone Regional Evaluation Workshop of EIACP Centres



The SACON EIACP PC RP team along with 16 other EIACP centers from the Southern Zone participated in the two-day Evaluation Workshop hosted by the Kerala State Council for Science and Technology, Trivandrum on 9 & 10 October 2023. During the event, the SACON EIACP team presented and highlighted the activities conducted by the centre since 2019.





## *Training & Outreach Activities*

### *Training Program for Forest Officer Trainees*

1. A two-day training program was organised for the Officer Trainees of the SFS Induction Course 2022-2024 batch from CASFOS, Burnihat, Assam, as part of their South India Tour. The training was planned for 06 and 07 December 2023, which included lectures and interactions with various SACON faculty on Wetland Ecology and its Management and a field visit to a few wetlands of Coimbatore.



2. A one-day training program was organised for Officer Trainees of the 2023-2025 SFS Induction Course from CASFOS, Coimbatore, on 15 December 2023, which included interactions with various SACON Scientists and a visit to the different SACON Laboratories learning about their activities and functions.











Date	Name of Institution	No. of Participants
5 Oct 2023	Annai Sathya Arasu Kuzhanthaigal Nala Kaapagam, Coimbatore	40 students & 05 staff
6 Oct 2023	Forest Research Institute, Dehradun	45 students & 02 staff
4 Dec 2023	Isha Home School, Coimbatore	37 students & 10 staff
11 Dec 2023	RLBCAU, Jhansi	11 students & 2 staff
12 Dec 2023	College of Forestry, Dapoli	26 students & 1 staff



## POPULAR ARTICLES

### *Wetland habitats in a breeding range of Spot-billed Pelicans*

Rachaveelpula Sreeja, T. Ramesh & Riddhika Kalle

Just as the mother's womb keeps the baby alive, water on earth breathes in life. Earth without water is uninhabitable, yet we don't care for the waterbodies that sustain life. Wetlands are one of the most threatened habitats on earth. Increasing anthropogenic pressure and erratic climatic conditions are causing floods or droughts in wetlands, disturbing the equilibrium of the fragile ecosystem and the dependent organisms. Anthropogenic pressures such as the construction of dams and reservoirs, diversion of excess water for agricultural purposes, release of chemical and industrial effluents into the adjacent waterbodies, drainage system outlets into wetlands, growth of invasive species, unsustainable fishing practices, overexploitation of the resources, eutrophication are some of the primary causes for disturbance created in the natural wetland ecosystem. Indirect results of anthropogenic influences, such as increasing global temperatures, rising sea levels, flooding, and drought conditions, burden these habitats. Human settlements are often observed along the water source, as water is essential for sustaining life. However, the mismanagement of wetlands by people is evident with the foul smell and green waters that welcome us as we visit most of the wetlands.





To study the wetlands that are important to many species that thrive in the habitat vis-a-vis the welfare of humans, the Science and Engineering Research Board, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India has funded a project under the core research scheme titled "Characterisation of wetland habitats in a breeding range of Spot-billed Pelican". Often, species are considered bioindicators of the health of the wetland ecosystem, and vice-versa, where the wetland quality determines the species' wellbeing, also holds true. To study the wetland quality and its effect on the survival of wetland-dependent bird species, we have chosen a single species, the Spot-billed Pelican (*Pelecanus philippensis*). The comparison of the various water quality parameters among the multiple wetlands utilised by the Spot-billed Pelican will help in understanding the wetland health and the conditions that can support the species.



The study is initiated in India's southernmost breeding range of Spot-billed Pelican, i.e. Tamil Nadu. The preliminary field observations reveal that the several threats in the wetlands are severe, thereby threatening the lives of those dependent on them. One of the most commonly observed threats in the wetlands of Tamil Nadu is the growth of two invasive species, namely *Eichornnia* and *Prosopis*. The availability of open waters in the wetlands is scarce due to the invasion of weeds. Open waters are essential for many bird species as it helps them in visual and tactile hunting. The growth of the weeds doesn't allow sunlight penetration into the waterbody, thereby reducing the primary production and affecting the entire food chain. Any change in a single water parameter will have a ripple effect on the other parameters due to the interconnected nature of the system. If a single threat mentioned above could imbalance an ecosystem, the number of threats these ecosystems face can potentially change the nature of the wetlands and the kind of life they support.



The motive of the study is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the network of wetland habitats utilised at the landscape level by Spot-billed Pelican in its breeding range of Koonthankulam Bird Sanctuary. The study aims to assess the health of a few selected wetlands in wet and dry seasons by measuring the water's various physiochemical and biological parameters, understanding the vegetation structure surrounding the wetland, and identifying the threats in the wetlands. We plan to combine the field observations with the spatiotemporal land use changes analysed through GIS to have a bird's eye view of the wetland network, wetland quality, prevailing threats, and these wetlands' ability to support the Spot-billed Pelican breeding population. The study intends to highlight the threats to Spot-billed Pelican and wetlands at the landscape level to take site-specific actions to ensure the well-being of both the habitat and species.



This study is vital in the current scenario as it provides essential information for wetland management required for conserving wetland-dependent birds. The study's outcomes will act as a critical tool for park managers to take necessary steps to curtail further degradation of the wetlands at the landscape level, thereby safeguarding the homes of many other species that share these wetlands with Spot-billed Pelican.

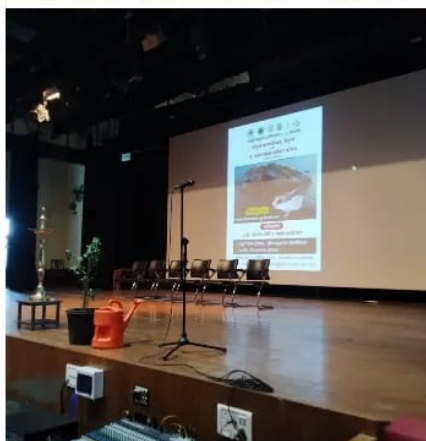
Rachaveelpula Sreeja  
PhD Scholar, SACON  
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# Screening of the Indian Swiftlet Documentary in Vengurla

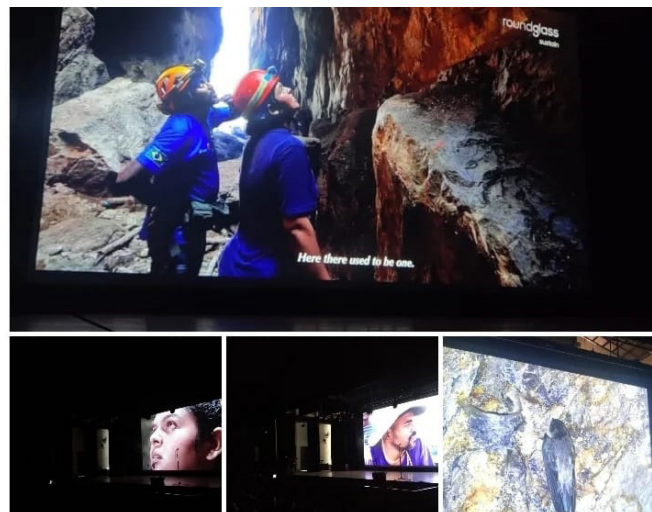
Dhanusha Kawalkar & Manchi Shirish S.

Education and awareness play a pivotal role in habitat and species conservation. The local citizens of the area are the most critical stakeholders in any conservation action. The Indian Swiftlet, a black edible nest producer, is endemic to the Western Ghats of India and Sri Lanka. This species produces the nest, amongst the most expensive animal products in the international market. Over the world, the species faces threats from unsustainable nest collection, habitat loss, land-use change, and climate change. This species belongs to India's Schedule-I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. For the last four years, SACON attempted to understand the population status, distribution, and ecology of the Indian Swiftlet on the West Coast and Offshore Islands of Maharashtra, Western Ghats through a project funded by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Govt. of India.





On 15 December 2023, SACON, Br. Balasaheb Khardekar College, Vengurla, and Vengurla Municipal Council attempted to reach people's hearts and minds through the recently made documentary by Round Glass Sustain. Through this very informative documentary, we attempted to introduce everyone to the Indian Swiftlet and its ecology. Effortlessly, the documentary narrates our work on the species' ecology and conservation. It also showcases our efforts towards studying the species and the challenges we faced during the process.



After the documentary screening, we also engaged the people in a discussion. We discussed how the combined efforts can help conserve species and their habitat. We also sensitised them about biodiversity in general, which can directly support the conservation process. All the people actively interacted and expressed their happiness towards making the documentary and liked it. They also congratulated SACON for the continuous efforts and this significant initiative taken for the Indian Swiftlet conservation.

Through this event, we could introduce Indian Swiftlet conservation, fostering a culture of conservation within communities to ensure the species' long-term survival.

Dhanusha Kawalkar  
PhD Scholar, SACON  
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