

ACTIVITY REPORT



1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026

Drafted by: Naren Sreenivasan, Sandeep Menon (communications sub-committee)

The Wildlife Association of South India (WASI) is actively engaged in conservation initiatives across the Cauvery River Basin.

WASI implements several long-term conservation and research programmes, including the Mahseer Radio Telemetry Programme and the conservation of the Shivanasamudram Fish Sanctuary. The organisation also provides internship opportunities for undergraduate and postgraduate students pursuing degrees in the sciences and design disciplines.

In addition to its long-term programmes, WASI undertakes short-term research and conservation projects, conducts outreach and environmental education activities, and delivers capacity-building and training programmes for a wide range of stakeholders. Details of these activities and achievements are presented in the following sections.



Smooth-coated otters thrive in the Shivanasamudram Fish Sanctuary, benefiting from the abundant aquatic resources that are carefully protected by WASI and nurtured within the reserve. PC: Sandeep Menon

Welcome to WASI's Activity Report for the Financial Year 2025–26.

At the outset of the reporting period, WASI was engaged in a collaborative fish conservation project with the Coorg Wildlife Society and the Department of Fisheries, Government of Karnataka. The organisation also made significant progress in securing a five-year research permit from the Karnataka Forest Department, enabling fisheries-related research in and around the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary and Shivanasamudram region.

During the financial year, WASI expanded its internship programme through collaborations with both a domestic and an international university. These partnerships supported the completion of four independent M.Sc. theses focused on various aspects of river ecology and freshwater conservation.

WASI's outreach programme achieved several notable milestones during the year. Our Conservation Biologist was invited to deliver a keynote address at a national water conference hosted by Ahmedabad University. WASI was also invited to participate in a panel discussion on the conservation of the Cauvery ecosystem. A major highlight of the year was WASI's participation in Matsya Mela 2025, organised by the Karnataka Department of Fisheries. The WASI exhibition stall was visited by the Hon'ble Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister of Karnataka, as well as the Minister for Animal Husbandry and Fisheries and the Director of Fisheries, Karnataka. In addition, WASI representatives delivered presentations and participated in numerous events, both online and in person, throughout the year.

In the field of riverine research, WASI achieved a significant milestone with the publication of the first documented account of the nesting behaviour of the endangered Leith's Softshell Turtle (*Nilssonina leithii*) in the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary. The study was published in the journal *Hamadryad*, contributing valuable information towards the conservation and management of this threatened species. WASI also initiated a new project aimed at capturing high-resolution images of native fishes of the Cauvery River Basin. These images will form the foundation of a comprehensive fish identification guide designed to support researchers, conservation practitioners, and naturalists. The Mahseer Radio Telemetry Project was restarted in January 2026 following a period of fundraising. As of the end of the reporting period, nine Mahseer had been fitted with radio transmitters and were being actively monitored by WASI field teams, with valuable support from a dedicated group of interns. During the year, WASI also hosted a team of scientists from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, who conducted surveys of aquatic macroinvertebrates in the Cauvery River system.

Capacity building and environmental education remained key areas of focus. WASI partnered with the OSB India Group to conduct a series of educational workshops and awareness programmes. The organisation also collaborated with a school group to develop and perform a skit highlighting the importance of Bengaluru's lakes and wetlands. Other outreach initiatives included an interactive river-based learning programme conducted in partnership with the Forest Department for students from Uyyamballi and Doddahalli schools, as well as a public snake-awareness workshop hosted at Bannerghatta.

Internally, WASI undertook a member engagement initiative aimed at strengthening organisational capacity. This programme focused on identifying and mentoring members interested in taking on leadership roles and contributing to ongoing research, conservation, and outreach projects.

The activities described in this report reflect WASI's continued commitment to freshwater conservation, scientific research, environmental education, and community engagement across the Cauvery River Basin.

A field guide for freshwater fishes

Dates: March 2026 onwards

Benefactors: General public

Number of people engaged: 10

Towards the end of the reporting period, WASI commissioned an ambitious and innovative project to document the freshwater fishes of the Cauvery River Basin in a manner never previously attempted in India.

Most existing fish field guides rely heavily on illustrations or photographs of preserved specimens, which often fail to accurately capture the appearance, colours, and distinguishing features of fishes in their natural state. To address this gap, WASI has partnered with leading fish taxonomists and underwater photographers to develop what is expected to be India's first comprehensive fish identification guide based entirely on high-resolution photographs of native freshwater fishes in life.

Significant progress was made during the year in designing, testing, and refining the specialised equipment and photographic protocols required for the project. Following extensive field trials, the imaging system has been successfully optimised and is now capable of producing high-quality scientific and educational images suitable for both identification and publication purposes.

The project aims to document approximately 120 native fish species from the Cauvery River Basin, including several rare and threatened species, as well as two species that may be new to science. In addition to creating an invaluable educational resource, the project will generate a permanent visual archive of the region's freshwater biodiversity and provide important reference material for researchers, conservation practitioners, fisheries managers, and students.

The significance of this initiative extends well beyond outreach and education. By producing high-quality photographic records of freshwater biodiversity, the project will contribute directly to taxonomic research, species documentation, and conservation science. It represents an important step towards improving our understanding of the Cauvery River Basin's aquatic ecosystems and strengthening the scientific foundation required for their long-term conservation.



Strengthening WASI's field teams

Dates: through the year

Benefactors: WASI Watch and Ward team and Chamundi Die Cast Pvt. Ltd.

Number of people engaged: 8

During the reporting period, WASI continued to invest in the professional development and operational capacity of its Watch and Ward teams through a series of training, awareness, and capacity-building initiatives.

Recognising the critical role played by field personnel in safeguarding the Shivanasamudram Fish Sanctuary, WASI also allocated dedicated resources towards upgrading equipment and improving field preparedness. Towards the end of the year, the organisation undertook a comprehensive programme to equip the team with modern tools and resources designed to enhance surveillance, monitoring, communication, and reporting capabilities.

The initiative included the provision of new uniforms, upgraded field gear, and advanced aerial survey equipment, enabling the team to carry out their duties more safely, efficiently, and effectively. These improvements are expected to strengthen patrol operations, improve situational awareness, and support more effective monitoring of conservation areas within the sanctuary.

The Watch and Ward team remains a cornerstone of the Shivanasamudram Fish Sanctuary management programme, playing a vital role in protecting fish populations, monitoring human activities, and supporting the long-term conservation objectives of the sanctuary.

This capacity-building and equipment enhancement programme was implemented with the support of WASI's CSR partner, Chamundi Die Cast Pvt. Ltd., whose contribution has helped strengthen on-ground conservation efforts and improve the effectiveness of sanctuary management.



Mahseer Radiotelemetry Project

Dates: January to March 2026

Benefactors: WASi research program

Number of people engaged: 32

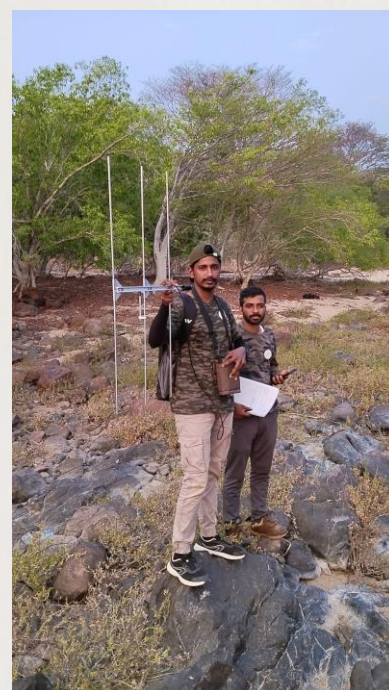
The Mahseer Radio Telemetry Programme is a long-term ecological research initiative launched by WASI in 2024 to better understand the movement ecology and habitat requirements of Mahseer, the flagship fish species of the Cauvery River Basin.

The primary objective of the study is to document the movement patterns, habitat use, and behavioural responses of Mahseer in relation to changing environmental conditions, particularly fluctuations in river flow resulting from water releases from the Krishnarajasagara (KRS) and Kabini reservoirs. By generating detailed, real-time information on how fish respond to these changes, the programme seeks to provide a scientific basis for the management of river flows and freshwater habitats.

In addition to its research objectives, the programme serves as an important capacity-building platform. Each year, the project engages between 20 and 50 interns, providing hands-on training in radio telemetry techniques, ecological field methods, remote sensing applications, data collection, and wildlife monitoring. Through this initiative, WASI is helping to build a new generation of conservation practitioners with practical experience in freshwater research.

During the reporting period, nine Mahseer were fitted with radio transmitters and released back into the river for continuous monitoring. These individuals are currently being tracked by WASI's field teams, generating valuable information on movement patterns, habitat preferences, and seasonal behaviour over a 365-day monitoring period.

As a long-term study, the Mahseer Radio Telemetry Programme is expected to generate unprecedented insights into the ecology of one of India's most iconic freshwater fishes. The findings will contribute directly to conservation planning and are expected to inform policy recommendations related to river management, fisheries conservation, and the maintenance of environmental flows from dams. Ultimately, the programme aims to ensure that water management decisions better reflect the ecological requirements of freshwater biodiversity within the Cauvery River Basin.



Community outreach and education

Dates: 24/2/2026, 13/8/2025

Benefactors: Vanodaya trust and School children from Boohalli school

Number of people engaged: 60

During the reporting period, WASI was invited to deliver a presentation on riverine ecology and the conservation significance of the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary as part of a programme celebrating the activities of a local nature club in the Kanakapura region.

The event provided an opportunity to engage with students and community members on the importance of freshwater ecosystems, biodiversity conservation, and the role of protected areas in safeguarding the ecological integrity of the Cauvery River Basin. As part of the outreach initiative, WASI distributed Kannada-language educational books to participating students to encourage further learning and engagement with environmental issues.

As a continuation of the programme, students from Uyyamballi and Doddahalli schools were invited to participate in an interactive riverside learning session. The students received hands-on exposure to freshwater ecology through direct interaction with WASI's field staff and interns, gaining insights into river ecosystems, aquatic biodiversity, and ongoing conservation activities within the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary.

The programme concluded with the distribution of educational materials and commemorative T-shirts to all participating students. Through initiatives such as these, WASI seeks to foster environmental awareness, inspire curiosity about nature, and encourage greater participation in freshwater conservation among young learners.



Four MSc. dissertations

Dates: Through the year

Benefactors: a) Jurina Stacey & Anisha Gogoi (St. Josephs University, Bengaluru)

b) June Keulen & Mirjam Krikke (Wageningen Universitiy & Research, Netherlands)

Number of people engaged: 4 MSc. students

During the reporting period, WASI collaborated with the Department of Zoology, St. Joseph's University, and the Geo-Information Science Department of Wageningen University & Research (WUR) to support the completion of four M.Sc. dissertations focused on key aspects of riverine ecology and conservation.

Jurina and Anisha conducted research on the distribution and ecological impacts of free-ranging water buffaloes along the banks of the Cauvery River. Their work examined the interactions between livestock and riverine habitats, providing valuable insights into the potential effects of grazing and habitat use on freshwater ecosystems.

June and Mirjam undertook a geospatial analysis of riverine habitats important to Mahseer populations. Using remote sensing and GIS-based techniques, they mapped and quantified habitat types associated with Mahseer occurrence within the Cauvery River system. Building upon this work, the study was expanded to identify and prioritise ecologically significant river stretches across Karnataka that may warrant future conservation attention.

Collectively, these dissertations have contributed valuable scientific information towards understanding and conserving freshwater ecosystems in the region. Copies of all four theses are available for reference at the WASI office.



Dates: through the year

Benefactors: OSB India group

Number of people engaged: 35

During the reporting period, WASI conducted a series of three workshops for participants from the OSB India Group, a corporate banking organisation that is in the process of establishing an internal nature club to promote environmental awareness and employee engagement with conservation issues.

The workshops focused on nature education, freshwater ecology, and the importance of conserving riverine ecosystems. Participants were introduced to the ecological significance of the Cauvery River Basin and the conservation challenges facing freshwater habitats in India.

As part of the programme, participants visited the WASI campus at Shivanasamudram and undertook field visits to the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary. These immersive experiences provided opportunities to observe wildlife in its natural habitat and gain firsthand exposure to ongoing conservation and research activities.

The workshops also included practical training in basic ecological research methods, field observation techniques, outdoor skills, wilderness safety, and first aid. By combining classroom-based learning with hands-on field experiences, the programme aimed to build a deeper appreciation for nature while equipping participants with the knowledge and skills required to engage meaningfully with environmental initiatives. The collaboration reflects WASI's growing engagement with the corporate sector and its commitment to promoting environmental stewardship through experiential learning and nature-based education.



Riverine action plan and reserach

Dates: January 2026

Benefactors: Karnataka Forest Department

Number of people engaged: 150+

In January 2026, WASI formally approached the Karnataka Forest Department (Wildlife Division) seeking permission to undertake a comprehensive five-year assessment of fish diversity and fisheries ecology within the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary. The proposed programme includes a detailed ecological study of Mahseer, the flagship fish species of the Cauvery River system, as well as a systematic survey of all native fish species inhabiting the Cauvery River and its tributaries within the protected area.

Despite the ecological significance of the region, no comprehensive fisheries survey has been conducted within the sanctuary in modern times. Historical records of fish diversity from the area are largely based on collections made from fish markets along the river over 150 years ago. The proposed study will therefore provide the first scientifically rigorous baseline assessment of the sanctuary's freshwater fish fauna and is expected to generate valuable information on several threatened species, range-restricted species, and potentially species new to science.

Alongside the research proposal, WASI submitted a comprehensive fisheries conservation and management action plan to the Department. The plan outlines a series of recommendations aimed at improving the management of aquatic habitats, enhancing natural fish breeding and recruitment, and strengthening year-round protection for native fish populations. If implemented, these measures will contribute significantly towards the long-term conservation and sustainable management of the Cauvery River's unique freshwater biodiversity.

AMBASSADOR SPECIES



GoK adopts mahseer as an ambassador species for river conservation during the 68th wildlife week 2022



Macro invertebrate ecology

Dates: 5/3/2026 to 8/3/2026

Benefactors: IISC scientists

Number of people engaged: 6

During the reporting period, WASI provided logistical and field support to a team of scientists conducting surveys of aquatic macroinvertebrates across the Cauvery and Arkavathi river systems.

Field sampling was carried out at multiple locations, including the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, Shivanasamudram, Ranganathittu, and river stretches within the Kodagu region. WASI assisted the research team with field coordination, site access, local ecological knowledge, and on-ground survey operations.

The work formed part of a larger state-wide assessment of aquatic macroinvertebrates and freshwater bioindicators. These organisms are widely recognised as important indicators of water quality and ecosystem health, making them valuable tools for monitoring the ecological condition of rivers and streams.

By supporting this initiative, WASI contributed to the generation of baseline ecological data that will aid in understanding freshwater ecosystem health across Karnataka. The survey also provided opportunities for knowledge exchange between WASI staff and academic researchers, further strengthening the organisation's capacity in freshwater biodiversity monitoring and ecological assessment.



A first report on nesting behaviour of a turtle

Dates: 14-1-2026

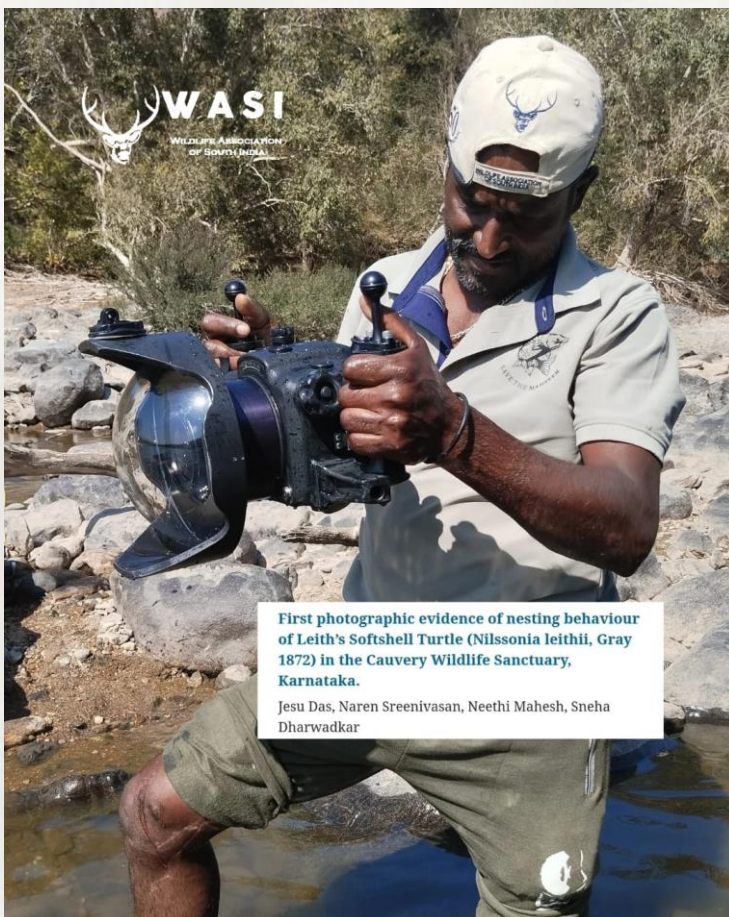
Benefactors: Hamadryad journal

Number of people engaged: Scientific community

During the reporting period, WASI achieved a significant research milestone with the publication of the first documented account of wild nesting behaviour in the endangered Leith's Softshell Turtle (*Nilssonia leithii*).

The observation was made during a fisheries survey conducted within the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, when members of the WASI field team encountered a nesting female turtle along the riverbank. Subsequent review of the available scientific literature revealed that the nesting behaviour of this species had never previously been documented in the wild. Recognising the significance of the observation, the team undertook a detailed investigation and formally published its findings in the journal *Hamadryad*.

This publication represents an important contribution to the understanding of one of India's most threatened freshwater reptiles and provides valuable baseline information for future conservation and management efforts. It also highlights the importance of sustained field-based research in uncovering critical aspects of freshwater biodiversity that remain poorly understood. The study adds to WASI's growing body of scientific contributions on freshwater ecology and reinforces the organisation's commitment to generating knowledge that supports evidence-based conservation of the Cauvery River Basin and its unique aquatic ecosystems.



Matsyamela 2025 and official book release!



Dates: 20/11/2025 to 24/11/2025

Benefactors: General public

Number of people engaged: 6,000+

During the reporting period, WASI participated in a four-day fisheries-focused event organised by the Government of Karnataka at the Veterinary College campus. Recognising the organisation's long-standing contributions to freshwater conservation, WASI was invited to host a prominent exhibition stall at the event.

While the majority of exhibits focused on fisheries development, aquaculture, and related industries, WASI's stall was unique in its emphasis on the conservation of wild freshwater fish and aquatic ecosystems. As a result, the exhibit attracted considerable interest from visitors, policymakers, researchers, and fisheries professionals throughout the event.

A major highlight of the programme was the visit of the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Karnataka and the Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, both of whom interacted with the WASI team and viewed the conservation exhibits. Other distinguished visitors included the Minister for Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, as well as the current and former Directors of Fisheries, Karnataka.

During the inaugural ceremony, an original WASI publication titled *Matsyadharm Yatra* was officially released by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Karnataka. The publication highlights the ecological, cultural, and conservation significance of Karnataka's freshwater ecosystems and fisheries resources and represents another important contribution to WASI's outreach and educational efforts.

A digital copy of *Matsyadharm Yatra* is freely available for download from the Publications section of the WASI website.



Dates: 6/11/2025

Benefactors: General public, Naturalist Training School

Number of people engaged: 350,000 (over 3 years)

Over the past three years, WASI has curated and maintained a permanent educational exhibit on the freshwater ecology of the Cauvery River Basin at the Regional Museum of Natural History (RMNH), Mysuru. The exhibit was designed to showcase the remarkable biodiversity of the Cauvery river system while highlighting the importance of freshwater conservation and the ecological challenges facing India's rivers and aquatic ecosystems.

Since its inauguration, the exhibit has become a popular destination for school groups, university students, tourists, government officials, and members of the public interested in wildlife and conservation. According to museum records, the exhibit has attracted more than 350,000 visitors over the past three years, making it one of the most widely accessed freshwater conservation education initiatives undertaken by WASI.

During the reporting period, Mr. Sandeep Chakrabarti of WASI conducted a special interpretive session at the exhibit for a visiting school group from Mysuru. The session was also attended by participants of the 2025 Naturalist Training School (NTS) cohort and featured discussions on the ecology, biodiversity, and conservation challenges of the Cauvery River Basin. The programme was further enriched by the participation of the former Head of Forest Force, who shared his perspectives on wildlife conservation and environmental stewardship.

The continued success of the exhibit demonstrates the value of public education as a conservation tool and reflects WASI's commitment to making freshwater ecology accessible to a broad and diverse audience. Through partnerships with institutions such as the Regional Museum of Natural History, WASI continues to inspire greater appreciation and understanding of India's freshwater ecosystems.



Two talks at the Bangalore room

Dates: 2/11/2025 and 23/11/2025

Benefactors: Attendees at the Bangalore Room

Number of people engaged: 300

As part of the World Wildlife Week celebrations in November 2025, WASI contributed to a series of public outreach events through two special lectures delivered by the organisation's President and Conservation Biologist.

The first lecture, titled *"The Forgotten Freshwater Ecology of the Cauvery Basin,"* was delivered by WASI's Conservation Biologist and highlighted the organisation's contributions to freshwater research and conservation since the 1970s. The presentation explored the rich aquatic biodiversity of the Cauvery River system, the challenges facing freshwater ecosystems, and the importance of long-term conservation efforts to protect these often-overlooked habitats.

The second lecture was delivered by WASI President, Mr. G. Susheel, and focused on the increasingly important issue of human-wildlife conflict in India's agricultural landscapes. Drawing upon decades of field experience, the talk examined the ecological and social factors driving conflict between people and wildlife, including crop-raiding elephants, large carnivore encounters, and the broader challenges of managing shared landscapes. The session also explored potential approaches to conflict mitigation and the need for balanced, science-based conservation strategies.

Both lectures were well attended and generated considerable interest among participants. Together, they provided valuable opportunities to raise awareness about two critical conservation issues: the protection of freshwater ecosystems and the growing challenge of human-wildlife coexistence in rapidly changing landscapes.



Snake safety and awareness workshop

Dates: 12/10/2025

Benefactors: WASI friends and well-wishers

Number of people engaged: 80

During the reporting period, WASI organised a one-day Snake Awareness and Snakebite Safety Workshop at Bannerghatta National Park. The programme was designed to improve public understanding of snakes, promote coexistence with these often-misunderstood reptiles, and provide practical guidance on snakebite prevention and response.

The workshop was led by Mr. Sanjeev Padnekar, a WASI member, founder of Praani Pet Sanctuary, and a recognised resource person for snake rescue and snakebite awareness initiatives. Through a series of engaging presentations and discussions, participants were introduced to the diversity of snakes found in the region, methods for identifying commonly encountered species, and the ecological importance of snakes in maintaining healthy ecosystems.

A major focus of the workshop was snakebite safety and emergency response. Participants learned appropriate actions to take when encountering a snake, common misconceptions surrounding snakebite treatment, and scientifically recommended first-aid procedures. To reinforce these lessons, attendees participated in an interactive role-playing exercise that simulated real-life snakebite scenarios and demonstrated the correct response protocols.

The programme concluded with an opportunity for participants to observe and learn about several live snakes from the Praani educational collection, providing a safe and engaging platform to dispel myths and foster a greater appreciation for these remarkable reptiles.

Through initiatives such as this, WASI continues to promote science-based environmental education while building public awareness of wildlife conservation and human-wildlife coexistence.



Panel discussion on the Cauvery river basin

Dates: 21/9/2025

Benefactors: Attendees at the Bangalore Creative Circus

Number of people engaged: 250

During the reporting period, WASI's Conservation Biologist participated in a public panel discussion focused on the ecology and conservation of the Cauvery River Basin. The event brought together a diverse group of experts from Bengaluru working across various aspects of water management, conservation, and environmental policy.

The discussion explored a range of issues relevant to freshwater conservation, including water resource management, wastewater treatment, river restoration, ecological security, and the long-term sustainability of freshwater ecosystems. WASI contributed insights from its ongoing research and conservation initiatives within the Cauvery River Basin, highlighting the importance of integrating ecological considerations into water planning and management decisions.

The event was attended by members of the public, providing an important platform for dialogue between experts and citizens on the challenges and opportunities associated with conserving one of South India's most important river systems.

Through participation in such forums, WASI continues to contribute scientific perspectives to public discourse while promoting greater awareness of freshwater conservation and river ecosystem management.



A keynote address at Aqualougues 2025



Dates: 25/8/2025 to 29/8/2025

Benefactors: Ahmedabad University, Water studio and experts

Number of people engaged: 300+

During the reporting period, WASI's Conservation Biologist was honoured to deliver the keynote address at *Aqualougues 2025*, a prestigious national conference on water and freshwater conservation hosted by Ahmedabad University.

The four-day conference brought together water practitioners, researchers, policymakers, students, and conservation professionals from across India to engage in meaningful discussions on the country's water challenges and opportunities. The programme featured a diverse range of activities, including workshops, focus group discussions, panel discussions, and creative performances aimed at highlighting the social, ecological, and cultural dimensions of freshwater conservation.

Drawing upon WASI's extensive experience in the Cauvery River Basin, the keynote address focused on the ecological significance of freshwater ecosystems, the challenges facing river conservation in India, and the role of long-term field-based conservation initiatives in safeguarding aquatic biodiversity. The presentation also highlighted lessons learned from WASI's work in fisheries conservation, river ecology, community engagement, and protected area management.

Participation in Aqualougues 2025 provided an important opportunity to share experiences from the Cauvery River Basin with a national audience and to engage with leading practitioners working across the freshwater sector. WASI was proud to represent the Cauvery River Basin at this prestigious event and contribute to the broader dialogue on the future of freshwater conservation in India.



Fish stocking program

Dates: 19/8/2025

Benefactors: Local fisherman society

Number of people engaged: 22

On 19 August 2025, WASI conducted a fish stocking programme within the Shivanasamudram Fish Sanctuary as part of its ongoing freshwater conservation mission and community-based fisheries management efforts.

The programme was designed to support the recovery and enhancement of native fish populations while simultaneously providing long-term benefits to local fishing communities. Fish released within the sanctuary are afforded protection during their early growth stages, allowing them to mature within a secure environment. As these fish reach adulthood, they naturally disperse into adjacent river stretches and community-managed fishing concessions, where they contribute to local fisheries and livelihoods.

A key principle of the programme is the careful selection of species for stocking. WASI follows a precautionary approach to ensure that only ecologically appropriate species are introduced and that stocking activities do not adversely affect native biodiversity or disrupt the ecological balance of the river system.

The fish stocking initiative forms part of WASI's broader strategy of integrating freshwater conservation with sustainable resource use. By combining habitat protection, fisheries management, and community participation, the programme seeks to strengthen both ecological resilience and local livelihoods within the Cauvery River Basin.

The Shivanasamudram Fish Sanctuary continues to serve as an important model for community-supported freshwater conservation, demonstrating how protected areas can contribute to both biodiversity conservation and sustainable fisheries management.



Shivanasmudram Management Plan

Dates: 8/8/2025

Benefactors: General public, activists, conservation practitioners

Number of people engaged: 500+

WASI has been actively involved in the conservation and management of the Shivanasamudram Fish Sanctuary for over 18 years. During the reporting period, the organisation commissioned a comprehensive review of the programme with two primary objectives: to document the history and evolution of the sanctuary initiative and to develop a strategic roadmap for its future management over the next decade.

To undertake this exercise, WASI collaborated with a doctoral researcher from the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE). The project involved extensive field surveys, stakeholder consultations, and interviews with local communities, conservation practitioners, government officials, and subject matter experts. Historical records and documentation from the WASI archives were also reviewed to capture the development and achievements of the sanctuary programme since its inception.

The findings of this work have been compiled into a comprehensive publication titled *Sustaining Shivanasamudra: A Socio-Ecological Blueprint for the Management of the Shivanasamudram Fish Sanctuary*. The document provides a detailed account of the sanctuary's history, current challenges, management priorities, and opportunities for future growth. It also outlines a series of recommendations, targets, and strategic actions intended to guide conservation efforts over the next ten years.

The publication serves as an important planning and decision-making tool for WASI and its partners, helping to inform future conservation interventions, stakeholder engagement, programme development, and fundraising efforts. In keeping with WASI's commitment to knowledge sharing and transparency, the document has been made openly accessible and can be downloaded from the Publications section of the WASI website.

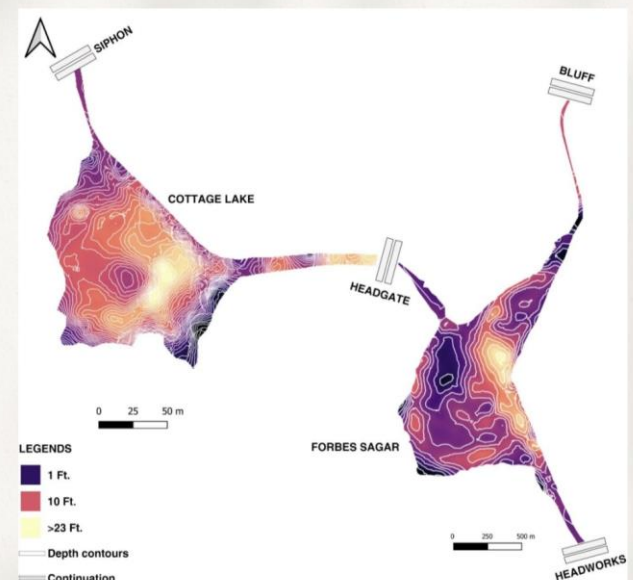
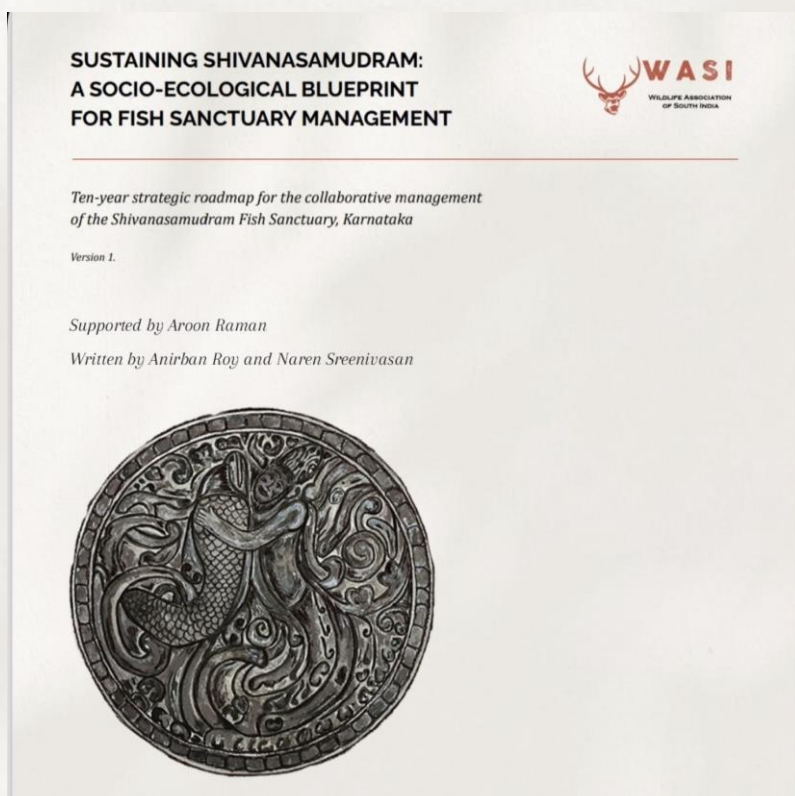


Figure 7: Bathymetric map of cottage lake and Forbes Sagar: Depths are shown in a gradient, with shallow zones in purple (1-10 ft), moderate depths in red (10-23 ft), and deeper areas in yellow (>23 ft)

Naturalist Training School



Dates: 3/8/2025 and 31/1/2026

Benefactors: CNAT participants

Number of people engaged: 15

The Naturalist Training School (NTS) has been a valued partner of WASI for several years. Through its flagship programmes, NTS provides environmental education and nature-based training to members of the public, students, professionals, and government officials, helping to build awareness and capacity in conservation and natural history.

During the reporting period, WASI collaborated with NTS to deliver a series of educational sessions for participants of the Certificate Course in Natural History and Nature Education (CNAT). These engagements were conducted through both online and in-person formats and focused on introducing participants to the principles of freshwater ecology, aquatic biodiversity, and river conservation.

Drawing upon WASI's field experience in the Cauvery River Basin, the sessions highlighted the ecological importance of freshwater ecosystems, the threats they face, and the conservation approaches being implemented to protect them. Participants were also introduced to practical aspects of aquatic biodiversity monitoring, fisheries research, and community-based conservation initiatives.

Through this continued partnership, WASI contributed to strengthening environmental awareness and building a broader community of informed naturalists and conservation practitioners with an appreciation for freshwater ecosystems and their conservation.



Member engagement activity

Dates: 19/7/2025 and 8/11/2025

Benefactors: WASI members

Number of people engaged: 18

During the reporting period, WASI conducted two internal workshops that brought together members of the Governing Council, heads of various sub-committees, and interested members from the wider WASI membership base.

The workshops were designed to provide participants with a comprehensive overview of the organisation's activities, programmes, and strategic priorities. A key objective was to identify individuals with the skills, expertise, and interest required to contribute to existing and future initiatives, while fostering a greater sense of ownership and engagement within the organisation.

Through interactive discussions and collaborative exercises, participants explored the various components of WASI's conservation, research, outreach, and capacity-building programmes. The workshops also served as a platform for understanding how different activities and stakeholders contribute to the organisation's broader mission.

An important outcome of these sessions was the development of a comprehensive organisational canvas that mapped the various elements of the WASI ecosystem, including programmes, partnerships, stakeholders, resources, and opportunities for growth. This framework will serve as a valuable tool for future strategic planning, visioning exercises, organisational development, and fundraising initiatives.

These workshops reflect WASI's commitment to building institutional capacity, strengthening member participation, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the organisation and its conservation programmes.



Dates: 25/6/2025 to 27/6/2025

Benefactors: Wildlife Institute of India

Number of people engaged: 350

During the reporting period, WASI participated in the Indian Conservation Conference (ICCON 2025), held from 25–27 June 2025 at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun. The conference, inaugurated by the Hon'ble Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav, brought together more than 500 conservation scientists, researchers, policymakers, students, and international delegates from across India and abroad.

The conference provided an important platform for the exchange of scientific knowledge, emerging research, and conservation best practices across a wide range of ecological disciplines. WASI contributed to the event by presenting findings from its ongoing Cauvery Mahseer Radio Telemetry Programme, one of the organisation's flagship freshwater research initiatives.

The presentation highlighted preliminary insights into Mahseer movement patterns, habitat use, and the application of radio telemetry techniques in understanding the ecological requirements of this iconic freshwater species. The study represents one of the few long-term telemetry-based investigations of wild Mahseer populations in India and has important implications for river management and fisheries conservation.

WASI was represented at the conference by intern Ms. Tamanna Aiyappa, who presented the research on behalf of the organisation. Her participation provided valuable professional exposure and reflected WASI's commitment to mentoring young conservationists and creating opportunities for students to engage with the wider scientific community.

Participation in ICCON 2025 enabled WASI to share its work with a national audience, receive feedback from leading conservation professionals, and strengthen its engagement with India's broader conservation research network.



Dates: 12/6/2025 to 15/6/2025

Benefactors: Tamil Nadu Forest department & KANS

Number of people engaged: 40

In June 2026, WASI was invited by the Tamil Nadu Forest Department and the Kenneth Anderson Nature Society to undertake a fisheries and biodiversity assessment of forested wetlands and lakes within the Hosur and Dharmapuri Forest Divisions.

The survey formed part of an ongoing initiative by the Tamil Nadu Forest Department to evaluate and document ecologically significant wetlands for potential recognition under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Over a four-day period, the WASI team conducted field assessments across multiple wetlands, examining key ecological parameters including aquatic biodiversity, lake depth profiles, habitat characteristics, and surrounding forest cover.

The survey generated valuable baseline information on the ecological condition and conservation value of these freshwater ecosystems. The findings were compiled into a technical report and submitted to the Tamil Nadu Forest Department to support its wetland conservation and management efforts.

This engagement reflects WASI's growing recognition as a specialist organisation in freshwater ecology and fisheries conservation and highlights the organisation's expanding role in supporting wetland assessment and conservation initiatives beyond the Cauvery River Basin.



Dates: 30/5/2025 and 31/5/2025

Benefactors: Rainmatter Foundation and the water alliance

Number of people engaged: 25

During the reporting period, WASI participated in a two-day workshop that brought together experts from a wide range of disciplines related to water management, including groundwater recharge, wastewater treatment, water governance, public policy, and freshwater ecology.

WASI was invited to contribute to the ecological component of the programme, drawing upon its experience in freshwater conservation and riverine ecosystem management. During the workshop, WASI representatives shared insights from their field-based research and conservation initiatives in the Cauvery River Basin, highlighting the importance of integrating ecological considerations into broader water management and policy frameworks.

The workshop provided a valuable platform for knowledge exchange and interdisciplinary dialogue among practitioners working across the water sector. It also helped strengthen connections between conservation science, water resource management, and policy development.

The programme was hosted by the Rainmatter Foundation, the social impact and sustainability initiative supported by Zerodha, and aimed to foster collaborative approaches towards addressing India's evolving water challenges.

Dates: 26/5/2025 to 28/5/2025

Benefactors: WASI management

Number of people engaged: 15

As part of an ongoing programme appraisal and review process, WASI hosted noted author and senior conservationist Mr. Praveen Bhargav for a three-day independent assessment of the organisation's management of the Shivanasamudram Fish Sanctuary.

During the assessment, Mr. Bhargav interacted extensively with field staff, reviewed ongoing conservation activities, and visited several project sites and conservation initiatives managed under the WASI umbrella. The visit provided an opportunity for a comprehensive evaluation of programme implementation, stakeholder engagement, and long-term management strategies for the sanctuary.

Based on his observations, Mr. Bhargav provided valuable recommendations and strategic guidance aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of conservation interventions and enhancing the long-term sustainability of the programme. These recommendations have since been incorporated into the Shivanasamudram Fish Sanctuary Management Plan and will help guide future conservation actions within the sanctuary.

Such independent evaluations reflect WASI's commitment to responsible, ethical, transparent, and effective conservation practice. By actively seeking external review and incorporating expert feedback into programme planning, WASI strives to continuously improve the quality and impact of its conservation initiatives.



Conference at Kuvempu University

Dates: 12/4/2025

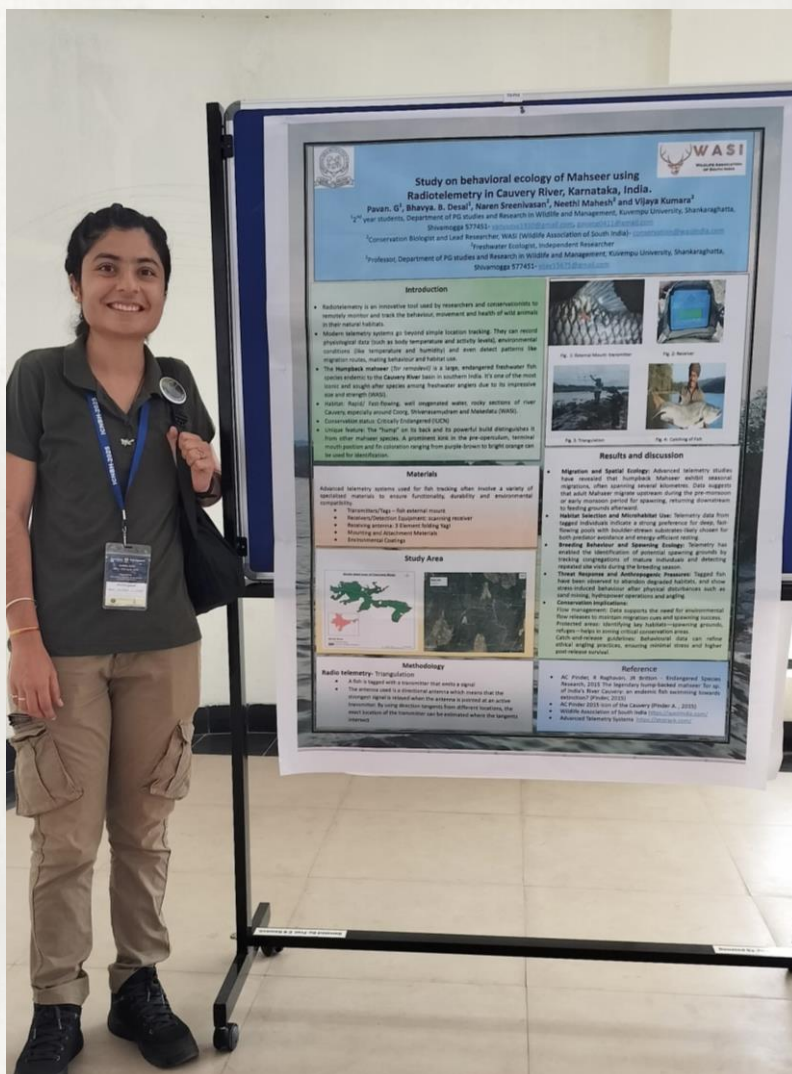
Benefactors: The conference was open to all students

Number of people engaged: 200+

During the previous reporting period, a cohort of 16 students from Kuvempu University visited WASI's Mahseer Radio Telemetry Project in the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary as part of their academic training in wildlife research and ecology.

The students received hands-on training in the practical aspects of wildlife tracking, including the use of radio telemetry equipment, field navigation techniques, and the collection of ecological data. The programme provided participants with valuable exposure to field-based research methodologies and the challenges associated with conducting long-term ecological studies in a protected area.

Following the field visit, the students analysed and presented their findings through both oral and poster presentations at Kuvempu University's Annual Conference on Wildlife and Ecology. The programme served as an important platform for bridging academic learning with practical conservation research while encouraging student engagement in freshwater ecology and wildlife science.



Humpback mahseer collections from Coorg

Dates: a) 1/4/2025 to 6/4/2025

b) 30/4/2025 to 2/5/2025

Benefactors: Coorg Wildlife Society & Karnataka Fisheries department (Harangi Hatchery)

Number of people engaged: 8

Over the past five years, WASI has invested considerable effort in building the capacity of local fishing communities by training traditional fishermen in scientific fish-sampling methodologies. As a result, two fishermen from Sangam village, Mr. Jesu Das and Mr. Ramachandra, have developed into highly skilled field assistants and are now recognised across South India for their expertise in riverine research and fish handling.

During the reporting period, their services were requested for a state level conservation initiative in the Coorg region focused on the Critically Endangered Humpback Mahseer. The project involved surveying a 20-kilometre stretch of river encompassing the Valnoor area and the Dubare Reserve Forest to locate, identify, and safely capture juvenile and sub-adult individuals.

Over a period of 12 days, the team successfully captured and transported 56 specimens to a local repository and to the Harangi Fish Hatchery. The fish will be reared to sexual maturity as part of an ongoing effort to evaluate the species' suitability for assisted breeding and population recovery programmes. This achievement highlights the value of integrating local knowledge and community participation into freshwater conservation initiatives while demonstrating the success of WASI's long-term capacity-building efforts.





Thank you!

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