Conservation Times

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Honouring Nature Conservation

TWSI initiative: www.birdfair.org

THEY PLANT MANGROVES TO SAVE THEMSELVES

COASTLINE ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION MISSION BY ORISSA VILLAGERS

Photo Feature on page 18

By Indrani Chakraborty

Cultural Researcher and Partner at Svanir Wilderness Ecostay (Bhubaneswar, Orissa), writes on environment, supports Mangrove Conservation through rural communities.

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Every sapling these women plant protects lives, homes, and coastal land from powerful cyclones as well as healing the Ocean's health. Your monitory support can help them continue this mission — to grow more mangrove trees, care for nurseries, bring more costal village women to join this work and protect our coast. The initiative runs only on people's kindness, with no government help yet. Let's stand with Soumya Ranjan Biswal and his team of women from Astaranga, this narrative is about their pioneering and exemplary success with mangrove ecosystem. The photographs have been taken by Soumya Ranjan and his volunteer colleagues who support this mangrove initiative. – Editors.

Whenever I think of mangroves, I picture a serene boat ride with a picnic lunch, bird sightings, and peaceful hours on the water. They seem like a mere backdrop to leisure, not the frontline defenders they truly are. Mangroves truly are a vital part of the ocean ecosystem, a living shield that deflects cyclone winds, calms unruly waves, and heavy rain, protecting coastal homes, fields, and lives.

Our meeting with Soumya Ranjan Biswal, a young conservationist from Astaranga block in coastal Odisha and a UN India YuWaah Advocate, transformed my perspective. The area of their operations is about 50 km away from Bhubaneswar and near the sea shore of the Bay of Bengal, towards Puri and Konark.

Cyclonic threats: Growing up in a coastal village, Soumya lived in constant fear of cyclones ravaging shorelines and submerging homes. He witnessed storms like the Super Cyclone in 1999, Phailin in 2013, and Fani in 2019 halt life for days, stranding people in waist-deep water amid devastated fields.

Mangrove planting in progress, Soumya Ranjan Biswal

By Class VIII, he was pondering over solutions to safeguard his land and people. When in Class X, his geography book introduced mangroves as a protective wall against such calamities. His teacher, Susanta Kumar Parida at Surendranath Bidyapith (now Surendranath Government High School), elaborated further about the many unseen benefits of Mangroves, inspiring Soumya to act despite locals' ignorance of mangroves' role and their rampant degradation.

Soumya, realising the huge task ahead, mobilized women from fishing communities in villages like Nuagarh, Sahan, Jhadling, and

Mangrove seeds being carried to destination, Soumya Ranjan Biswal

Biluamundali. In Jhadling, he urged villagers to adopt Mangroves, explaining mangroves' protective power and the need for guardians over extractors. He convinced them to halt firewood collection and shift to conservation.

Women inclusive: In 2023, he launched the "Women for Mangroves Initiative" under Odisha Paryavaran Sanrakshan Abhiyan (OPSA), a Trust, he set up. It was to repair the fractured ecosystem and invite women to take lead. Initially reluctant, women like Nayana Kandi and others joined after training at his Astaranga Center, where visual evidence of mangroves blunting storms won them over. From five pioneers, it grew into a dedicated force.

After morning chores, women trek to mangroves, navigating knee to waist deep mud, tangled roots, crabs, hidden shells, snakes, and razor-sharp oyster shells that slice their feet most of the time. They collect seeds at low tide, nurture them in fenced riverside nurseries until saplings sprout.

Species' selection: Once the saplings are ready, indigenous knowledge helps them to identify which variety should be planted (rai, sinduka, kaliachua, bandari, and keruan suit marshy soil) depending on the marshy character of the soil. With a few fishermen ferrying by boat and guiding through dense forests, they transplant, at precise tides, seeds for

Insects now the attention

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TRIMURTY Builders and Developers has added a new "green" page in the real estate bible in India. It is by way of sponsoring "Butterflies' Ecosystem" first such book on these insects. It heralds a new era in wilderness conservation involving business and industry sector. Five volunteers of TWSI happen to be its co-authors. Its Foreword is by Dr. G.S. Bhardwaj, Director at Wildlife Institute of India. Introduction was my job, being President, TWSI. I happen to be Managing Director of TRIMURTY Group. The book is available at Amazon.

Conservation Times has thankfully received contributions from new writers. Ivy Chen from Switzerland, Alusch Amoghli from Germany, Martin Goodman from UK, and Indira Chakraborty from Orissa (India) are being accorded welcome in this edition. Karen Bryant has this time shared details of Folly Wildlife Rescue, a charity in her county, Tunbridge Wells in UK. We much appreciate such support.

Our web site has been redesigned with several new features added. We are proud to have on board the mentors who made this voluntary organization earn a niche in conservation space. Like to see: www.birdfair.org and do send valued suggestions to further improve it.

The 29th Indian Birding Fair is slated to be held on 6-7 February 2026 at Jaipur's Man Sagar lake. It is being dedicated to insects' conservation, a topic probably being highlighted first time. Their consequential role needs to be acknowledged as they constitute feed for all species of birds. We shall be honoured to receive the narratives.

Job done and I am happy, Soumya Ranjan Biswal

mushy ground, propagules (stick variety of seeds) for firmer soil to avoid washouts or burial. Fenced beds shield from stray animals.

Over three years, they've planted 33,000 saplings across Jhadling and neighbors, with 45,000 more in nurseries awaiting tides, seasons, and funds.

Crowd funding: Planting is half the battle. Then follows protection. Women schedule patrols, two to four daily from 1 p.m. to dusk, perched on bunds, eyeing channels to deter fishers, crabbers, grazing buffaloes, goats, or illegal wood cutters. Sessions run three to four days weekly, four hours each during low tide.

The remuneration is Rs 6,000 monthly per person, vital where husbands' farm or casual labour falters, safer than prior crab hauls (18-20 crabs for Rs 300-500 amid bites and exhaustion) or firewood gathering. OPSA is entirely a crowd funded initiative by some philanthropists, plant lovers and well wishers. No government support yet, so the volunteer force often remains unpaid.

Plants foiled cyclone: "The plants that we have sowed are our children and we will never abandon our children even if we do not receiving money" stated most of the mangrove defenders to his author. .

Women like Lata, Nalini, Pooja, Mamina, Nayana, and Ranjulata Kandi consider mangroves as their first defence. Nalini recalls Fani's 2019, IMD warned of landfall near Jhadling, as families fled to shelters with essentials. Returning, men found the 1.5 km mangrove belt had dulled the fury, sparing homes while nearer sites crumbled.

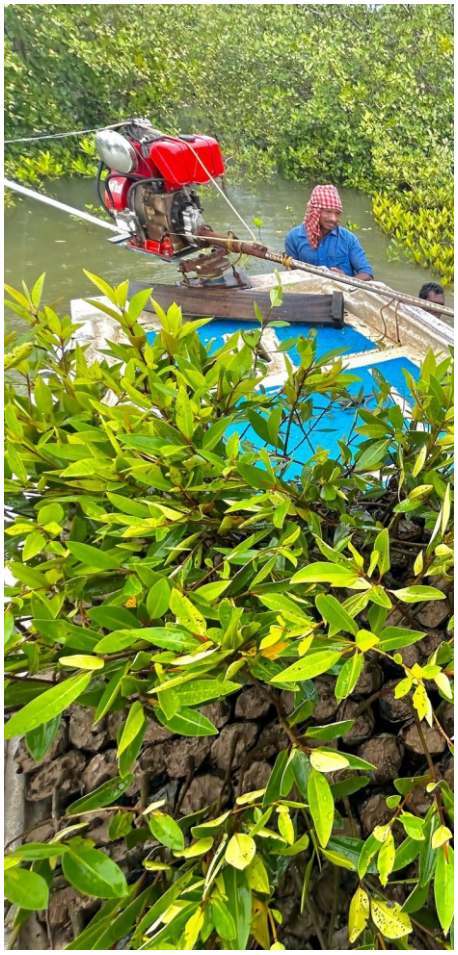
Cyclone Dana's 2024 threat near Bhitarkanika National Park and Dhamra Port evoked fears. Kendrapada's dense cover holds 81% of Odisha's mangroves. It is alongside Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur, Balasore, and Puri. New efforts minimized cyclonic surges, winds, and soil erosion. For 80 villages including Jhadling, mangroves now dictate survival.

Ecosystem caused: Soumya outlines mangroves' wider gifts: salt-tolerant trees thriving where freshwater meets sea in marshy intertidal zones, their roots trap nutrients, nurture fish, prawns, crabs as nurseries, and lure pregnant dolphins, whales for rich food webs. Far from mere barriers, they cradle feed, and shelter marine biodiversity, bolstering fisheries. Jhadling village ladies used to risk their lives for crabs and wood. Now they "guard what guards them." They are gaining new pride and dignity amid fuelling uncertain woes.

As I returned from the newly transformed scenario, I continue to think mangroves offer me a peaceful boat ride. But now I assess that the experiences are layered with new, more powerful pictures: women standing knee-deep in brackish water, carefully placing a fragile sapling into the mud. A group of them sitting on a narrow bund under the afternoon sun, watching over a young plantation so that no goat or buffalo strays in.

Support him: Soumya and his team of super women are on a mission of "A Million Mangroves by 2030". Steady monetary support from allies can scale this selfless mission, ensuring stability for Soumya and his dedicated women. Ultimately balancing the lost ecosystem to offer numerous benefits which usually remain hidden.

Happily, they perform knowing it would benefit their society, Soumya Ranjan Biswal



Using a boat to carry saplings, Sounya

To support this Mangrove Mission and for more details, contact:
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Indrani Chakraborty: email: visit.svanir@gmail.com

Soumya's organization is: Odisha Paryavaran Sanrakshan Abhiyan (OPSA Trust, Reg. No.: 41511901070). It pays the Jhalandi village group Rs 6,000 per month for patrolling and protecting the mangrove patches they have planted at two different sites.

The men and women of the village take turns patrolling every day based on mutual understanding. However, they have not received payment for the past two months due to a lack of support and funding.

For sapling plantation, OPSA pays Rs 10,000 per village for planting 1,000 saplings.

The plantation process usually takes 8 to 15 days, depending on the high and low tides. Due to a lack of funding, about 45,000 saplings are lying in the nurseries.

There are total 5 nursaries. 2 under Jhalandi Gram Panchayat,1 under Alasahi Gram Panchayat maintained by Biluamundali Community, 1 under Nuagarh Gram Panchayat, 1 is under Sisua Gram Panchayat

The pictures have been taken by Soumya Ranjan and various volunteers who have come to support them at different times.

A LUXURY GARDEN IN MARBELLA, SPAIN

By Martin Goodman
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Follow the Mediterranean coastline south around Spain and eventually you reach Marbella. Go along the walkway an extra mile beyond the city and you find a wooden pier reaching out into the sea. It belongs to the Marbella Club. Walk along it, look out, and you may well see dolphins arching their bodies out of the water. Turn around and take the steps uphill, past a swimming pool, and you are in the Marbella Club's grounds.

This is a luxury resort, with holiday apartments sited through gardens first planted seventy years ago. Our own apartment overlooked a swimming pool near the top of the Club's slope. Sit on the balcony in the morning, sip tea, turn on the Merlin birdsong identification app on your phone, and you can catch the location of each species as it wakes up: the greenfinch topping the tree to the left, the scratchy song of Sardinian warblers in the shrubs below, the thin call of the firecrest from a distant pine. Twenty-seven species in all, including the peregrine falcon that shrieks after dark before settling in its roost.

La Concha Conversations

This isn't a place we would usually afford. We're guests as the Club holds the second of La Concha Conversations, in which people active in protection and conservation of the natural world meet to share experiences. I've come to tell the group about the Bishnoi as featured in my book My Head for a Tree. The talks and panel discussions take place on the neighbouring land.

From Desert to Garden

This new acreage has doubled the Marbella Club's footprint. Once the grounds of the neighbouring estate, the land had turned to desert and scrub. Call this 'building land' and new apartment blocks would soon fill with guests and bring in money. This, they haven't done.

Instead, they planted a garden. My first visit was in 2024. By November 2025, plantings had expanded and grown in, and a clear logic was emerging.

The Prince Gardener's Vision

I'll let Prince Louis Albert de Broglie take up the explanation. Known as the 'Prince Gardener', renowned for the National Tomato Conservatory back in his French chateau, he was brought in to imprint the new garden with his sustainable vision. A group followed as he led us, barefoot, into the project.: 'Barefoot is the way to connect with the earth,' he tells us.

His lessons begin among a spiral of spiky aloe vera plants. 'It is important to protect rather than build,' he begins. 'That's part of stakeholder responsibility. Two years ago this was desert land. Now it is not only a beautiful garden - but a meaningful ecosystem.'

After a couple of days I begin to wonder about what isn't here: namely, weeds. Where are the wildflowers dropped as seeds by passing birds? The answer is that the weeds have been cleared away by the team of nine that now manages this land. This is a garden, not a rewilding project. Using the language of environmental science the Prince points out the logic: 'Positive externalities of the garden can generate revenues.'

As we walk the land, I recognize that we guests that are inhabiting it for a few days, buzzing with our eco conversations, are experiencing this 'positive externality'. Revenues come from the paying guests next

Martin Goodman speaking of the Bishnoi, beneath 'The Story Tree'

The barefoot 'Gardener Prince' among the aloe vera

door, and an interflow between this garden and the guests enhances the Club's attraction. As the Club's owner Jennica Arazi, tells us, 'People are at the heart of what we do. If you can touch somebody, hopefully it will stay with them for the rest of their life.'

Permaculture Principles

'The motto of permaculture?' the Prince poses, as we pass a high stand of acacia, an invasive species in these parts. 'The problem is the solution.' In this instance, rather than remove the acacia, by shaping and controlling its growth they had turned it into a maze. Children now come here and have fun engaging with the maze.

Alejando Orioli takes up the tale. Elsewhere in Marbella he is Director of the Arboretum Project, a charity restoring scrubland into a public forest using trees, shrubs, grasses and vines that are local to the region. That forest is being developed using permaculture principles, and that same logic extends to his oversight of this new project.

Ask Alejandro about the techniques he uses in his gardening and you'll get short shrift. 'It's not about the technique,' he says. 'It's not what we do but why we do it. The goal is that every time we use the soil life springs again.

'Before doing something, start with a filter. Is it going to be favourable or unfavourable to life? Biodiversity is fundamental to life – the more we enhance it, the more safety, health and resilience we have. At Marbella, at the door of the desert, each year it rains less. We get less than 400ml a year. But instead of vertical rain we have horizontal rain - the morning breeze moisture to the land from over the sea. We have plants that put this water into the soil.'

From Soil to Plate

Hotel guests chew through 190kgs a week of tomatoes in summer, and that summer's crop had included 240 different varieties. A giant among the local ones is the Beefheart tomato, a single one weighing in at 1.6kg – chefs turn them into Beefheart entrecote steaks.

The hotel is big on 'upcycling'. Fruits left untouched in guests' welcome baskets are turned into jams or flavour the hotel's home-brewed kombucha. They ferment their own vinegar – a cherry vinegar gave a red tinge and non-astringent taste to the pickled vegetables I tasted. Herbs from the garden flavour waters and decorate the hotel. The hotel has its own upcycling laboratory, with people working to identify novel plants and plant-parts that could be used in the kitchen. A new experiment is with cauliflower leaves – through a fermentation process, similar to that used to make kimchi, they soften the fibrous tissue to make the leaves edible.

Our tour of the garden concludes with lunch served on tables set in the shade of trees. Guests are brought out here to share meals inside the garden: it 'connects soil to the plate,' the Prince declares, and we all tuck in.

A Garden for All

That afternoon my own panel takes place under what has been designated 'The Story Tree'. While this garden is part of a luxury resort, whose aim is to brings its guests a sense of 'wholeness', it is not exclusive. Locals are welcomed to come and find their own connections, through the garden, with this planet which we all share. Children are especially welcome. They climb on top of a ring of straw bales, turn to the storytellers under the tree, and listen to tales of the miracles of life.

Alejandro Orioli

THE BIG WORLD AND ITS TINY HARD WORKERS

By Ivy Chen
Ivy Chen is a hobby writer, storyteller, and avid illustrator from Zurich, with a strong interest in animal welfare and environmental topics.
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Pollinators are vital to global food and biodiversity. Most insects, including bees, butterflies, flies, wasps, and beetles, are the world's main pollinators, alongside other pollinators such as birds, bats, and small mammals like monkeys. Approximately 75 percent of all flowering plants and more than a third of global food crops rely on them to reproduce. As they move from flower to flower in search of food, they carry pollen that fertilizes over 1,200 food crops and around 180,000 plant species each year, helping these plants prevent soil erosion, purify air, improve water quality, and sustain life across the planet.

Bee-home: Switzerland is home to approximately 615 species of wild bees, as well as honeybees, butterflies, hoverflies, and beetles that pollinate both crops and wildflowers. Together, they provide pollination services worth an estimated CHF 205 to 479 million per year (approximately USD 254 to 592 million), an invisible yet vital contribution to the national economy.

However, pollinator populations continue to decline. Around 45 percent of the country's wild bee species, 279 in total, are threatened, and another 9.6 percent, or 59 species, have already gone extinct.

In alpine regions, cold-resistant bumblebees and flies, and also butterflies that are drawn to diverse alpine flowers, are the main pollinators. As temperatures rise, alpine flowers begin to bloom earlier, while many insects still wake from hibernation at the same time as before.

Mismatch: According to Envirobites (Alpine Plants May Struggle for Pollination as Climate Warms, 2022), some pollinators move higher up the mountains in search of cooler habitats, but plants adapt to new altitudes much more slowly. Since most insects depend on familiar flower species, this growing mismatch leaves them with fewer feeding options and reduces pollination success.

In the lowlands, intensive agriculture such as frequent cutting of grasslands has destroyed large areas of wildflower meadows and hedgerows that once provided food and nesting sites for pollinators.

Ivy Chen's illustration, landscape offering more than we can see.

Switzerland's strict Plant Protection Products Ordinance regulates how and when pesticides may be used. Still, harmful residues continue to affect insects and contaminate nearby soil and streams, according to the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (BAFU).

New plan: To counter these declines, the Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG) launched the National Action Plan for Bee Health (2014–2019). It aimed to reduce bee losses, expand flower-rich farmland through payments under the Direct Payments Ordinance, and align pesticide-testing rules with OECD standards. FOAG data show that winter losses of honeybee colonies ranged from 9 to 23 percent, largely because of Varroa mites introduced through imported colonies.

Recovery?: Cooperation with Apisuisse, the national umbrella organization for Swiss beekeeping associations that represents around 18,000 beekeepers and coordinates national bee health monitoring and training, continues today. Bee losses from pesticides have fallen thanks to these measures, but lasting recovery will require long-term commitment from policymakers, researchers, and agricultural producers.

Globally, about one-third of major pollinators – including the red mason bee, bumblebees, and butterflies such as the Apollo and the Small Blue – are at risk of extinction. Across Europe, nearly 100 additional wild bee species have recently been listed as threatened, with over 20 percent of bumblebee and cellophane-bee species facing extinction.

The number of threatened European butterfly species has also increased by 76 percent over the past decade, according to the latest IUCN Red List (2025). Widespread habitat loss, intensive agriculture, pesticide contamination, invasive species, and a warming climate all reduce feeding sources and disturb the natural balance between pollinators and plants.

Food security: The accelerating loss of pollinators makes pollinator conservation crucial not only for biodiversity but also for our food security and ecosystems. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and ecological farming help maintain productivity in balance with the natural world. Reducing chemical use, planting diverse crops, restoring wild meadows, and using native flowers all help rebuild healthy landscapes.

Policymakers and citizens can make a difference by supporting pollinator-friendly projects and creating more feeding and nesting habitats for wild bees.

Sources:Pollinator.org – Threats to Pollinators(n.d.)
Xerces Society – Who Are the Pollinators?(n.d.)
SwissInfo.ch – Nearly half of Swiss bee species on endangered 'red list'(2024)
Swiss Agricultural Research – Demand, supply and value of insect pollination for the Swiss agricultural production(2017)
Envirobites – Alpine Plants May Struggle for Pollination as Climate Warms(2022)
IUCN – Mounting risks threaten survival of wild European pollinators – IUCN Red List(2025)

City beehives destroying wild bee populations in Switzerland, wikipedia

WE WASTE WATER HOW NOT DO IT?

By Karen Bryant
The writer is based in Britain and has been voyaging for a long time to distant wildlife parks to experience conservation and contribute to it.
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There are lots of good initiatives going on but the world just needs more joined-up thinking and collaboration – pity there isn't one central website that could collate them by country and/or sector that companies or individuals could contact regarding their suggestions that people could refer to for inspiration. Here's a few more that come to mind:

Barbados: On holiday in Barbados we noticed solar panels on bus shelter roofs which allowed passengers to charge their mobiles/use wi-fi while waiting for buses. I found the signs amusing. The photo shows a friendly policeman on the beat, Barbados style using a segway – it was nippy to get about short distances and non-polluting.

Nowadays our water company, South East Water, sends weekly emails to customers giving updates what they are doing & gives tips to remind us to use less water. Herewith a few extracts from recent ones during this summer that many people could adopt.

What are we doing?
As well as our efforts to reduce demand through reducing leakage, we've been working to protect supplies too. Over the last 5 years, we've been working with farmers and landowners to protect raw water quality and quantity. Meaning we can capture the most amount of water possible, that is of the best quality so less treatment is needed.

Through this work we've sustainably managed 15,097 hectares of land, 880 hectares more than our target.

What can you do?
You've been doing a great job so far. If you have plans for a BBQ or using water outdoors this weekend, then below are just a few more tips on how to make the most of it.

Clean your BBQ kit the eco way - Fill a bowl with soapy water to clean utensils and grills. Once it's cooled, reuse the water on flower beds (if not too greasy).

Serve smart - Use reusable or compostable plates or cutlery to cut down on washing up.

Don't waste your ice - Pop leftover ice cubes into pots or hanging baskets, they'll melt slowly and give plants a gentle drink.

Get the whole family involved - Create your own drip-watering system by filling an old plastic bottle with water, poking holes in the lid and placing it upside down into the soil. To save even more water, put a tray or saucer under the pot to catch and reuse water.

Our top tips on changes you may be able to make:
1. Unless it's for your health or

A Barbados policeman using a segway, ease of doing, Karen

safety, try and not use the hosepipe during this period.

2. Keep showers to 4 minutes or less, it can save up to £135 a year.

3. No need to fully flush, using the short flush on button toilets or adding a specialised bag to cistern toilets to reduce the flush to only a few litres per time

4. Swapping hoses for watering cans - it can save as much as 100 bottles of pop, every 15 minutes!

5. Reusing water for gardening - like cooled cooking water, from tumble dryers and dehumidifiers and from baths, sinks and showers.

6. Turning off taps - while brushing your teeth, but also when cleaning or washing the dishes.

Remember, all water comes from the environment, we can't make more, so we must protect water resources.

Top tips: Be a weather watcher - with the forecasted rain, let that do the work in your garden.

Only boil the kettle with the amount of water you need. No wastage and less energy used too.
Check for leaky loos and taps, and fix anything you find.
Toilet leaks can add £175 a year to your water bill.

Collect cold water: While you're waiting for water to heat up, stick a bottle or bucket under the tap to collect all the cold water that would otherwise be wasted down the drain. This is ideal to use to wash down any surface, and you'll be surprised how much you can capture in a single day!

FOLLY WILDLIFE RESCUE

Conservation Times received a 2026 calendar from Karen Bryant in Tunbridge Wells (Britain): A Year At Folly Wildlife Rescue. This charity admits 3,500 animals per year. It relies on "charitable donations" and needs GBPounds 25,000 per month to run.

The calendar is thankfully acknowledged. Karen is requested to convey to its organizers: Annette and Dave Risley and their three children for making it a fully equipped and functioning wildlife hospital.

The calendar will be used and show cased to all TWSI Volunteers who always wait for "donations" (eg., the absurd play: Waiting For Godot by Samuel Beckett) which never arrive (Godot never arrived)! It is India not Britain! **- Editors**

Folly Wildlife Rescue calendar for TWSI sent by Karen Bryant

SAVING RAPTORS TO NURTURE NEXT GENERATION

Dr. Munir Virani
I was born and raised in Nairobi Kenya and consider myself a global leader in raptor research and c onservation with over 25 years of experience in developing innovative and effective solutions to protect birds of prey and their habitats. I am currently the Chief Operating Officer of the Mohamed Bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund, launched in 2018 by HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Abu Dhabi. The goal of the Fund is to conserve raptors around the world as critical elements of ecosystems, by ensuring that these magnificent birds continue to thrive for future generations to cherish.
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The sun is just breaking over the steppes when we spot him. Simon—that's what we've named this young Saker Falcon—sits perfectly still on a weathered rock, his radio tag catching the morning light. I'm crouched may be ten feet away, trying not to breathe too loudly. My heart is hammering, but not from the cold. It's from the weight of what this moment represents.

I'm in Mongolia with my colleague Kiran Ghadge on a mission for the Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund, documenting one of conservation's most remarkable success stories. The Saker Falcon is Mongolia's national bird, but it's also a national symbol in the UAE—a connection that bridges two cultures united by their reverence for this magnificent raptor. In partnership with Voices from The Roof of the World, we're making a documentary about our decade-plus-long project here. We're calling it *Saker Skies.*

Amazing number: The numbers tell part of the story: 27,000 retrofitted power poles, 5,000 artificial nests, more than 25,000 fledged Saker Falcons over the past thirteen years. But numbers don't capture the moment when a Mongolian herder gallops up on horseback, grinning as he points to the nest box he helped install. Numbers don't explain why my throat tightened when I watched a young student named Oggie hold my camera for the first time, his eyes wide as he tracked a falcon overhead.

The juvenile Saker named as Simon, Munir Virani

Horse racing is a mjor feature in the Nadaam Festival, Munir Virani

The next morning, we headed east into what locals call "raptor country." Our base camp in Bayandelger is beautifully simple—two traditional gers, a wooden field station designed by MBZRCF Science and Conservation Director Dr Andrew Dixon, and a communal kitchen where everyone gathers.

Experts here: From here, we follow the birds. We track fledglings tagged with satellite transmitters, document their hunting behavior, and watch them navigate this vast landscape. There's Buddy, the camp's resident raven who's appointed himself our unofficial mascot. He's mischievous and clever, stealing anything shiny and seemingly posing for our cameras.

Then there's Gigi, a rodent researcher studying what she calls the "landscape of fear"—mapping how Brandt's voles, the Sakers' primary prey, respond to predation pressure. Her work is meticulous, crucial, and helps us understand the intricate web that keeps these raptors alive.

Science or people: But the science is only half the story. The heart comes from the people.

We spent a day at Gun Galot Nature Reserve with herders who've become conservation partners. With support from an organization called Sarana, they've erected artificial nests and now see Sakers not just as birds, but as allies in controlling rodent populations.

One herder invited us to his family's ger, where his wife prepared *khor khog*—traditional lamb stew cooked with hot stones heated in a fire until they're white-hot, then dropped into a sealed pot with meat and vegetables.

Yesterday, we climbed a ridge beside a small Buddhist monastery to capture the landscape at golden hour. Below us, horses ran free across grassland that stretched to the horizon. Above, Saker Falcons and Cinereous Vultures rode the thermals. I watched Oggie, one of the young researchers, carefully cradle my heavy Nikon lens, his eyes scanning the sky for birds. In that moment, I realized this project isn't just about saving Sakers. It's about nurturing something deeper: the next generation of people who will care. And that is one of the pillars of the Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund.

Infectious passion: Each day here delivers moments that take your breath away. Installing nest cameras while falcons circle overhead. Flying drones over those remaining killer poles that we will eventually retrofit so that power lines will no longer kill birds. Capturing time-

The MBCC Researchers and students in action, Munir Virani

lapse footage of thunderclouds rolling over sacred hills.

Photographing falcons in flight at dawn, their wings catching light that seems to come from another world.

But what truly gave me goose bumps was filming and interviewing the scientists.

Their passion is infectious, their eyes lighting up when they talk about their work.

Gigi describing her rodent research with such intensity that you can feel her excitement about every vole burrow she's mapped.

Amaraa explaining power line retrofitting with the fervor of someone who's seen too many birds die needlessly and is determined to stop it.

Aagii discussing his tracking and artificial nest programs with a gleam in his eye that says he knows exactly how many lives he's saving.

These are the voices that make this story sing.

But it's the quiet moments that stay with you. Simon on his rock, alert and healthy. A herder's wife smiling as she serves tea.

A young student's face lighting up when he spots his first Saker through binoculars. These are the moments that remind you why this work matters.

People too: As we continue filming and documenting, I keep thinking about connection. Between birds and herders.
Between science and tradition.

Between the vast steppe and a small metal band on a falcon's leg that says: you were seen, you mattered, you belonged here.

This is only the beginning of our story. But already, I know it's one the world needs to hear.
After 30 years in conservation, I thought I'd seen it all.

Then I came to Mongolia.

At dawn, crouched just ten feet from a young Saker Falcon we named "Simon," I felt something shift. The light hit his radio tag just right, and in that stillness, I saw more than a bird — I saw hope.

Stay tuned
this is only the beginning.
Thanks to the
Mohamad Bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund
and Voices from the Roof of the World
for Making this possible.

WATER: A KEY FACTOR IN ESG STRATEGY

By Alusch Amoghli
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Water is a finite resource, and many regions are experiencing increasing scarcity due to overuse, climate change, and population growth. For industries like agriculture, manufacturing, energy, and mining, water is an essential input. A lack of access to sufficient, clean water can disrupt operations, causing higher costs, supply chain disruptions, and even business shutdowns. Strategically managing water consumption helps ensure continuity and reduces the risk of operational interruption.

Reducing Costs: Efficient water management translates directly into cost savings. By adopting technologies and processes that reduce water consumption, businesses can lower water-related expenses, reduce energy costs associated with water treatment, and cut down on wastewater management costs. For instance, closed-loop systems and water recycling initiatives significantly minimize fresh water demand, reducing operational expenses.

Governments around the world are tightening regulations on water use, particularly in water-scarce areas. Exceeding water consumption limits or discharging polluted water can lead to fines or legal penalties. By proactively addressing water management in their strategy, businesses can avoid these additional costs and comply with environmental regulations.

Differentiator: Consumers and investors are increasingly prioritizing sustainability. Companies that actively manage their water consumption are seen as more responsible, which can enhance their brand reputation and attract eco-conscious customers. Transparency in water management practices can build trust and customer loyalty.

Companies that prioritize water efficiency gain a competitive edge, particularly in water-scarce regions. In markets where resource availability is a concern, businesses that demonstrate responsible water use are more likely to maintain positive relationships with local governments and communities.

Addressing Climate: Climate change is altering precipitation

Stone quarrying stopped water flow at Bal Samand dam, Jodhpur, Harsh Vardhan

patterns, leading to more extreme weather events such as droughts and floods, which directly affect water availability. Strategic water management helps businesses prepare for these unpredictable changes, ensuring operational resilience in the face of climate-related water challenges.

Water-Energy Nexus: Water management is deeply intertwined with energy use, as water treatment and distribution are energy-intensive. Businesses that integrate water and energy management will enhance their resilience to climate change, ensuring that both water and energy needs are met sustainably.

Natural Ecosystems: Overuse or contamination of water resources can lead to ecological damage, affecting biodiversity and local economies. Strategic water management practices that restore and protect ecosystems help safeguard environmental health for future generations.

Aligning with Global Sustainability Goals: Global sustainability initiatives, like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasize the importance of responsible water management. Companies aligning their strategies with these goals demonstrate commitment to global sustainability, enhancing credibility and attracting socially responsible investors.

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Securing Futures: Water scarcity is projected to increase, and businesses that plan for water conservation today will be better positioned to secure access to water resources in the future, ensuring they are not left vulnerable to supply disruptions.

Efficient water management can be turned into actionable strategies that align with a company's day-to-day operations. These efforts focus on reducing consumption, optimizing usage, and mitigating water-related risks.

Ungulates face water crisis as well, Harsh Vardhan

Water-Efficient Technologies: Implementing low-flow faucets, efficient irrigation systems, and water-saving appliances can significantly reduce water use. Closed-loop cooling systems and water recycling technologies also allow industries to reuse water, minimizing their demand for fresh water.

Awareness: Encouraging employees, consumers, and communities to adopt water-saving behaviors—such as turning off taps, using water-efficient appliances, and minimizing water waste—can play a key role in reducing water consumption.

Rainwater: Harvesting rainwater for irrigation or industrial cooling is an effective strategy for reducing dependence on municipal water supplies.

This can be especially valuable in areas with seasonal rainfall or where fresh water is limited.

Circular Water Use: Industries can adopt circular water use models, where water is reused within production cycles.

This minimizes freshwater consumption and mitigates risks associated with water scarcity.

Partnerships: Working with local governments, NGOs, and other businesses on shared water stewardship initiatives can improve water availability, reduce waste, and ensure equitable access.

Collaborative efforts often lead to more effective water management solutions.

OF FOOT-PATHS & LAWNS

By Sudin
Sudin has a background in forestry management and holds a Permaculture Design Certificate (PDC). He is a partner in regenerative farming and nature education venture in Central India.
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Road side greenery in Copenhagen, Sudin

Encouraging wild vegetation across city scapes in Copenhagen, Sudin

I am glad that the idea of looking at private gardens appealed. Following the footsteps of the French and English aristocracy, the lawn has become a status symbol even in India.

Budapest: It was while living in Budapest and renting a house with a lawn, I became aware of the local rules that require owners to not let the grass overgrow. Hence not to fall

foul of the requirement that landlord had a running arrangement with a lawn mower to visit at regular intervals, I negotiated with the landlord to allow me to mark out a certain stretch where I planted some vegetables and flowers.

During spring the lawn would be full of dandelions and other wild flowers and bumblebees.

Bee song: Here I would negotiate with the lawn mowers (whenever I was around) to leave some patches of these flowers intact.

Had a bumblebee sting me once while I was pottering around in the soil, only if he had known!

I credit my British friend who first changed my outlook towards lawns.

Here in Copenhagen, the city planners plant (my guess is to allow) wild grasses and flowers by the sidewalks.

Cost factor: Also in the shared common spaces in high rise residential complexes, these wild grasses and flowers are encouraged. I believe this helps keep the maintenance costs low as well while giving the space a more natural look, encouraging pollinators being a bonus.

Appeal: Maybe we can take a leaf out of this. Need to canvass not to have home gardens, large size. Can we?

BUTTERFLIES' ECOSYSTEM AT AMAZON

Seven Volunteers of TWSI (Tourism and Wildlife Society of India) came out with a unique publication, Butterflies' Ecosystem: Rahul Sharma, Saksham Hajela, Rajaram Meena, Bhavya Sharma, Aakash Gupta, Mridul Vaibhav. and Govind Yadav.

It was possible through sponsorship by TRIMURTY Builders and Developers, led by Anand Mishra, its Managing Director and also President of TWSI. The book has forward by Dr. G.S. Bhardwaj, Director, Wildlife Institute of India.

It is available over Amazon, price Rs 290/- (less than GBP 3). The photograph shows Anand and Manoj Sharma (Editor at Conservation Times) formally releasing the book. Another photograph shows Anand being felicitated for this gesture by Volunteers.

Butterflies' Ecosystem book launch by Anand Mishra, President, TWSI (left) with Manoj Sharma at Wall Street Hotel, Jaipur.

29th Bird Fair

The 29th Indian Birding Fair will be staged on 6-7 February 2026 at Man Sagar lake, Jaipur.
It is being dedicated to Insects' Conservation, species least understood for their role in ecosystem management.

Felicitating Anand Mishra, TWSI President, for sponsoring Butterflies' Ecosystem book (from left to right) Aarti Yadav, Govind Yadav, Naman Vardhan, Rupali, Anand Mishra, Manoj Sharma, Harsh Vardhan and Rohit Gangwal, at Wall Street Hotel, Jaipur, on 20 December 2025, Rocky

Orissa cost line Mangrove success story Photo-Feature, thanks to Soumya Ranjan Biswal, a villager, who inspires men-women to plant Mangrove saplings at Bay of Bengal shores – so as to save people from onslaught of cyclones. Conservation Times much appreciates such a novel campaign. Contact details of Soumya are given on page 4, all photographs by Soumya.

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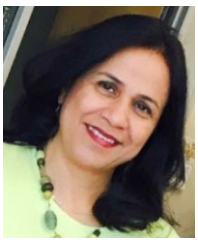
EDITORS FOR CONSERVATION TIMES

Anderson, Hartley

Hartley Anderson is a Sydney, Australia resident who, after more than fifty years in sales and marketing roles, has decided it was time to pursue leisure activities. His recent and new activity which is relevant to conservation is beekeeping. He has a strong interest in India.



Bhatnagar, Nandita

Nandita Bhatnagar is a Clinical Biochemist with a passion for writing. Her articles have been published in local newspapers in the Bay Area. She also authors and narrates her stories for a monthly audio magazine "Suhava" published through Rotary Club of Maharashtra for blind school children.

Goodman, Martin

Martin Goodman is an award-winning writer and publisher based in the UK. His book *Client Earth* told the tale of eco-lawyers on their global battle to save the planet from environmental collapse. He is Emeritus Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Hull.

McCrea, Edward
Retired as Chairman of Editorial Board (July 25), serving as Editor-emeritus

Ed McCrea is President of Environmental Education and Conservation Global, a US nonprofit conservation organization. Over the last fifty 50 years, he has worked in environmental education and biodiversity conservation at the local, state, national, and international levels.

Dr. Oishimaya Sen Nag

Oishimaya Sen Nag is a conservation storyteller, editor, and science communicator based in India. She serves as the Senior Editor of WorldAtlas.com and is also associated with the Bombay Natural History Society. Her current focus is writing about lesser-known species and community-led conservation.

Pandey, Binita

Binita Pandey is a researcher in entomology with a keen interest in insect taxonomy, behavior, conservation, and plant preference of pests. She has conducted a Bumblebee research project in Nepal. She is the founder and manager of the Nepal Pollinator Network.

Patil, Amit

Amit is an eco-lover based in Dallas, Texas. Believing that a traveler always starts out in his backyard, Amit traveled extensively across India. He kept his passion for nature alive after moving to North America and has traveled extensively around the continent.

Sharma, Manoj

Manoj Sharma worked for the Indian Statistical Service for 10 years and then immigrated to the USA to pursue graduate studies in statistics. Currently he is the Director of Biostatistics at Grail Inc., supporting the company vision of "Detect cancer early, when it can be cured".

Sharma, Satish

Authored 11 books on forest, wildlife management and biodiversity, specialized in ethnobotany and ethnozoology, did PhDs on Plant life of Weaver Birds (1991) and Study of Biodiversity and Ethnobiology of Phulwari WL Sanctuary (2007), former Forest Officer, based at Udaipur.

Sudin

Sudin is based in Denmark, into regenerative farming and nature education project. A postgraduate in Forestry Management, he holds a Permaculture Design Certificate and has experience across silviculture, natural-resource-based-rural-livelihoods domains in India. He believes in the resilience of a biodiverse ecosystem.

Thomas, Rosamma

Rosamma Thomas is a freelance journalist based in Maharashtra, India. She has worked in radio and print journalism. She has only ever lived in cities, despite being a wild creature at heart. She has supported by writing on a unique cause like House Sparrow ex situ breeding initiatives.

Vardhan, Mamta
Co-ordinating Editor

Mamta holds a PhD in Environmental Science and Policy. She has several years of experience working with rural communities in India and East Africa on issues that lie on the intersection of rural livelihoods and natural resources management. Mamta is currently based in Edmonton, Canada where she works as a Research Officer with the provincial Government.

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