

Project Update: February 2018

We conducted awareness and outreach programs on educating local communities on human-leopard interactions with focus on human safety in Niphad, Nashik, Maharashtra, India. This project was named 'Janata Waghoba' in Marathi which means "The wise big cat" and commenced in August 2017. We interacted with Forest Department officials to acquaint ourselves with the human-leopard situation in the context of loss of properties by leopard in a rural landscape, gaining some knowledge about landscape, schools, and colleges.

School activities

1. We visited 53 schools in 37 villages of Niphad taluka, Nashik district, Maharashtra. We explained the project activities to the respective headmasters and ask them for permission to conduct awareness activities in their school. The awardees activity was about leopard biology, precautions to take in areas where leopards are present. The activity was followed by a discussion on student's doubts and local issues related to human-leopard interactions. In most of these schools, we have successfully engaged with students of 1st to 10th grade of Zilha Parishad schools (District council) as well as private educational institutions.

Sr No	Villages name	School name	Organization	Grade
1	Nandur Madhmeshwar	Kai. Tatyasaheb Borste Madhymik Vidyalay	Maratha Vidya Prasarak Samaj	5 to 10
2	Nandur Madhmeshwar	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
3	Mhalsakore	Aarudh Madhymik and Ucch Madhymik Vidyalaya	Maratha Vidya Prasarak Samaj	5 to 10
4	Mhalsakore	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
5	Karanjgaon	Janata Vidyalaya	Maratha Vidya Prasarak Samaj	5 to 10
6	Bhuse	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 7
7	Kothure	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
8	Kothure	Swatantryveer Saandrkar Vidyalaya	Maratha Vidya Prasarak Samaj	5 to 10
9	Jalgaon	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 5
10	Sundarpur	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
11	Kathargaon	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
12	Kurudgaon	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
13	Niphad	Andintey Vidyalay and Junior college of	Nya. Ranade Vidya Prasarak Mandal, Niphad Sanchalit	5 to 12

		Science		
14	Songaon	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
15	Songaon, Karewasti	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
16	Songaon, Tumbade wasti	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
17	Saykheda	Janata English School and Uccha Madhymik Vidyalaya, Saykheda	Maratha Vidya Prasarak Samaj	1 to 12
18	Chatori	Karmveer Ad. Vitthalrao Hande Janata Vidyalaya, Chatori	Maratha Vidya Prasarak Samaj	1 to 10
19	Bhendali	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 7
20	Bhendali	Madhymik Vidyalaya, Bhendali	Janata Seand Mandal	8 to 10
21	Shingave	Godaandri Madhymik Vidyalaya	Jagruiti Yuandk Mandal	5 to 10
22	Shingave	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 7
23	Ramnagar (Berwadi)	Janata Vidyalaya, Ramnagar (Berwadi)	Maratha Vidya Prasarak Samaj	8 to 10
24	Ramnagar (Berwadi)	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 7
25	Andrhedarna	Shrimati Anusayabae Bhalerao Madhymik Vidyalaya	Panchkroshi Dnyanvikas Mandal	5 to 10
26	Daranasangavi	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 7
27	Chitegaon	Nutan Madhymik Vidyalaya, Chitegaon	Shihvbhakt Narayan Maharaj Shikshan Mandal	5 to 10
28	Chitegaon	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
29	Kherwadi	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
30	Kherwadi	New English School	Chandori	8 to 10
31	Datyane	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
32	Datyane	Karmveer Doc. Andsatrao Pawar Janata Vidyalaya	Maratha Vidya Prasarak Samaj	5 to 10
33	Sarole Thadi	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 7

34	Sarole Thadi	Madhymik Vidyalaya, Sarole Thadi	Krantiveer Andsantrao Narayanrao Naik Shikshan Prasarak Sanstha	8 to 10
35	Karanjee	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
36	Tamaswadi	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
37	Tamaswadi	Janata Vidyalaya, Tamaswadi	Maratha Vidya Prasarak Samaj	5 to 10
38	Dharangaon Khadak	Janata Vidyalaya, Dharangaon Khadak	Maratha Vidya Prasarak Samaj	8 to 10
39	Dharangaon Khadak	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 7
40	Khedale zunge	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
41	Khedale zunge	P.T. Vidyalaya and Ucch Madhymik Vidyalaya	Maratha Vidya Prasarak Samaj	1 to 12
42	Kolgaon	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
43	Malchari, Kolgaon	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
44	Bramhanwade	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
45	Shiandre	Madhymik Vidya Mandir and Kanisht college	Karniveer Andsantrao Narayanrao Naik Shikshan Prasarak Sanstha	5 to 12
46	Dindori taas	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
47	Dindori taas	Secondary School	-	5 to 10
48	Talwade	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
49	Talwade	Secondary School	-	5 to 10
50	Manjargaon	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 4
51	Naitale	Janata Vidyalaya	Maratha Vidya Prasarak	8 to 10
52	Pimpalgaon Nipani	Primary School	Zilha Parishad	1 to 7
53	Pimpalgaon Nipani	Adarsh Madhymik Vidyalaya	Sane Guruji Sjikshan Prasarak Mandal	8 to 10

2. Visited the Principal of Karanjgaon School in Niphad and the Sarpanch (elected head of a village-level Panchayat) of that village to have a discussion and plan the leopard ambassador's activity. In this activity, students were selected based on their keen interest in this topic to talk to their community about safety measures and leopard biology. The Principal and Sarpanch agreed to conduct the activity. Sarpanch made an announcement for villagers to gather near Gram Panchayat (formalised local self-governance system in India at village

level). We had 16 leopard ambassadors from Karanjgaon School, out of which 14 ambassadors informed people about safety measures.

College activities

1. We have conducted awareness activities in five colleges so far. We approached headmasters of colleges to explain our project activities to involve college students actively. Two colleges collaborated with us on the 'Janata Waghoba' project.
2. Organised and conducted Nikit Surve's (a wildlife biologist) lecture on human-leopard interactions for graduation students (grade 11 to 15) in two colleges of Niphad and Saikheda villages. I also talked to students about 'Janata Waghoba' awareness activities.
3. Was invited as a resource person on State level workshop on 'biodiversity' in Saykheda College to deliver a lecture on 'Janata Waghoba' awareness drive.

Sr No	Village	College name	Organization	Grade
1	Saykheda	Janata English School and Uccha Madhymik Vidyalaya, Saykheda	Maratha Vidya Prasarak Samaj	11 to 12
2	Kheddale zunge	P.T. Vidyalaya and Ucch Madhymik Vidyalaya	Maratha Vidya Prasarak Samaj	11 to 12
3	Niphad	Andintey Vidyalay and Junior college of Science	Nya. Ranade Vidya Prasarak Mandal, Niphad Sanchalit	11 to 12
4	Niphad	Karmveer Ganpat Dada More Arts, Commerce and Science College	Maratha Vidya Prasarak Samaj	11 to 15
5	Saykheda	Shri Swami Shatkopacharyji Maharaj, Arts, Commerce and Science College	Maratha Vidya Prasarak Samaj	13 to 15

Art material preparation

1. Aditi Deo – (artist at Doodle Factory) made a flash card on 'what is the best thing to do when we find cubs in agricultural fields?' As the sugarcane harvesting season has started. Finalised the text for a flash card (which is used in school awareness activity) with Dr Atherya and Nikit Surve and got translated it from Parikshit Suryandshi into the Marathi – a local language. The flash card is being used in awareness sessions which are conducted in schools.

Engagement with Forest Department

1. Met DCF (Deputy Conservator of Forest) and ACF (Assistant Conservator of Forest) at Forest Department of East Nashik Division to discuss about school awareness work with Nikit Surve. Based on the DCF's suggestions Niphad taluka in Nashik District of Maharashtra will be the project area.
2. Conducted a workshop for Forest Department staff in Nashik with Nikit Surve on human-leopard interaction, awareness, and outreach work. East Nashik Division and West Nashik Division's frontline staff and officers were present at the workshop.
3. Talked to forest guard – (Vinchur beat - Niphad), round officer, RFO – Range Forest Officer (Ground staff at Forest Department) to identify area from where the most leopard trapping requests and attacks on livestock were reported.
4. When the work was started some people being very suspicious about the project work. So, had a meeting with Deputy Conservator of Forest, East Nashik to discuss the issue and asked him for advise on how to proceed. We decided to release a press note about the awareness work which has started in Nashik to get recognition to this work. He spoke to SDO (Sub Divisional Officer-Niphad at Revenue Department) and requested him to organise a small meeting with Sarpanch, Talathi, Police Patil and Gram Sevak (members of Panchayat Samiti) to discuss the current situation of leopards and the awareness work. An outcome we receive was that the ground level government staff and locals know about the work.

Engagement with Media

1. Released a press note on 'Janata Waghoba' awareness work done in Nashik with Nashik Forest Department.
2. Had a meeting with a news reporter and editor from Lokmat (regional newspaper) as the editor wanted to meet me and discuss more about the project and our previous work in Junnar and Sangamner (Previous work funded by Rufford Small Grant). He is looking to make an article in his newspaper based on our discussion.

Engagement with Revenue Department

1. Attended a meeting with SDO (Sub Divisional Officer-Niphad), BDO (Block Development Officer) and Sarpanch, Talathi, Police Patil, Gram Seandk (Officers and ground staff at Revenue Department) of some villages. We explained the

project activities. The sarpanch of villages have known that 'Janata Waghoba' awareness work will start very soon in respective villages with the involvement of Revenue Department and Forest Department. BDO (Block Divisional Officer) asked us to provide a list of schools in which awareness sessions will be conducted and he will send the letter to schools from Revenue Department. SDO asked us to provide a report on the awareness work.

2. Visited the Panchayat Samiti office (a local governing body) to get a list of schools and colleges in Niphad taluka.
3. Trying to make contacts in the identified area with Sarpanch and Gram panchayat (locally elected body) to conduct the awareness work in villages and informed gram panchayats about awareness program

Conservation

1. In Bramhanwadi village (Niphad), three leopard cubs were found while harvesting the sugarcane field and villagers pressurised Forest Department staff to use the cubs as bait and trap the female leopard. Forest Department did that too but the female didn't get trapped. Dr Ajay Deshmukh (Veterinarian, Wildlife SOS) came to Niphad and reunited the cubs but female took only two. Accompanied to Forest Department staff to keep the third cub at the same place to reunite with mother, on the next night. The leopard mother took the third cub too.
2. Some villagers found two kittens of jungle cat in agriculture field and they took them home thinking those were leopard cubs. Accompanied the Forest Department staff to take them from villagers and released them at the same place.

Screening Waghobacha Khatala

1. Spoke with Sarpanch and villagers of Kurudgaon about the project activities and screening Waghobacha Khatala in a village. But due to the previous leopard incidents that happened in the village and aggression towards Forest Department, it was not possible to work further in the village. Forest guard was present with me to have a conversation with Sarpanch.
2. Screened Waghobacha Khatala- an awareness short film at Talwade village.
3. There is a NSS (National Social Service) unit in each college and they had organised camps in villages. We screened 'Waghobacha Khatala' in villages to villagers and students of Datyane and Naitale with the help of college students of Ozer College and Niphad colleges respectively in their respective camps.

Giving 'Waghobachya Goshti' books to schools

1. We have given a set of 10 booklets of 'Waghobachya Goshti' to 53 schools in Niphad, Nashik, Maharashtra.

Outreach

1. Presented the work on outreach activities in villages of Junnar Forest Division on 'Human safety in areas where leopards are present' in Conservation Ninja course

human-animal co-adaptation which was organised in collaboration with Wild Otters and Project Waghoba in Goa.

2. An article titled 'The Faith in Waghoba and The Adventures of Ajoba-The Big Cat' got published in Saevus magazine (September-November 2017).
3. Spoke to Peeyush Sakhsaria as he wanted to do awareness activities on leopards at Mangar Bani Government school, Delhi organised by the school eco club and BNHS CEC. Sent him all awareness material which we use in Maharashtra.
4. Worked on a report on awareness activities in Dindori, Nashik where recently two attacks on children by leopard occurred.
5. Attended a meeting in Sanjay Gandhi National Park where different stakeholders (Forest Department- Wildlife Division and Territorial Division, media, researcher, animal lover, NGO, members of Mumbaikars for SGNP) were present. The meeting was organised to discuss issues related to awareness and to understand more about leopards. The meeting helped me understand the complexity of the issue.
6. The work was presented with Nikit Surve, Shweta Shiandkumar, Iravatee Majgaonkar and Aritra Kshetry on workshop details for the Student Conference on Conservation Science which was titled 'Understanding the complexities of Human-wildlife interactions '
7. Two articles had been published in Conservation India and Last Wilderness website.

Other Awareness activities:

1. Visited a place where a 3-year old kid was attacked by a leopard at Dindori with Forest guards. DCF - East Nashik Division, ACF- Nashik, and RFO- Dindori wanted me to visit the village and talked to villagers about safety. I had a small interaction with villagers at the village. Another attack on a kid by leopard happened again in the same landscape a few weeks later. Deputy Conservator of Forest (East Nashik Division), Assistant Conservator of Forest (Nashik) and RFO (Dindori) called me there to conduct awareness sessions in surrounding villages where attacks had happened. I conducted sessions on human safety in Parmori, Andrkhed, Chinchkhed, Rajapur, Ozerkhed, Jopul, Aandnkhed, Andlkhed, Umbrale khurd and Waghad villages in Dindori Forest Range, Nashik. I spoke with Sarpanch of the villages and leaders. I spoke with Managers of Megafine Pvt. Ltd and Polygenta companies which are located near these attacks were happened, where local people work. Conducted sessions for local workers as well as higher officials (who were not locals but scared)
2. Visited Chandori (in Niphad) with Forest Department staff, where a leopard chased a motorbike and scratched a person who was riding in the night. Interacted with the villagers after this incident.



Awareness activity in school on leopard biology



Awareness activity in schools on precautionary measures using flash cards



Leopard ambassadors informing their parents about safety measures



Awareness activity in school based on research