



Assessment of the Conservation Status of Seahorses of Andaman and
Nicobar Islands through underwater surveys and Local Ecological
Knowledge (LEK)

ID: 39596-1
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Project Update

Even though the funds were received earlier the project started in full motion in September 2023 due to a lot of unfortunate circumstances.

However, in the past 10 months, a total of 10 field stations have been covered. We have so far collected secondary data from fishers and SCUBA divers to understand the species that are commonly detected, the habitat and seasons where they are most likely to be found, and other similar questions through a semi-structured questionnaire. We have gathered inputs from a total of $n=110$ respondents (70 fishers and 40 scuba divers). A total of 28 locations have been identified to be the sighting areas of seahorses, in 7 different types of habitats. The fishers responded that the rocky habitats were the most commonly sighted habitat while the sandy patches were the most common habitat where SCUBA divers sighted them. Among the three species, *Hippocampus kuda* is reported to be the most commonly sighted species followed by *Hippocampus histrix*. However, there is a possibility of sightings of species that have not been previously reported.





Underwater surveys have also been conducted in the locations where the seahorses have been reported to be spotted by SCUBA divers.



FIELD STATIONS COVERED:

Bycatch data from fishers collected from the landing centers of the following field stations:

- Junglighat (South Andaman)
- Diglipur (North Andaman)
- Wandoor (South Andaman)
- Burmanallah (South Andaman)
- Kodyaghat (South Andaman)
- Corbyn Cove Beach (South Andaman)
- Back Beach (South Andaman)

Information from SCUBA divers and underwater surveys conducted from the following field stations:

- Chidiyatapu
- Havelock Island
- Neil Island

OBJECTIVES:

The objectives that we set out in the proposal:

- a) Report the species distribution and habitat pattern of seahorses in Andaman and Nicobar and assess their conservation status from these islands through underwater surveys (snorkeling/ SCUBA Diving): **COMPLETED**
- b) Estimation of number of seahorses landed as by-catch in fish landing centers.: **COMPLETED**
- c) Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK) by collecting data from fishermen and SCUBA divers on aggregation sites of seahorses and formulate a species distribution map : **PARTIALLY COMPLETED** (the map is under process)
- d) Awareness programs and camps through questionnaire surveys and seminars for creating awareness on the need for conservation of seahorses to the local fishermen community : **NOT COMPLETED**
- e) Provide decision-making organizations and other important stakeholders with our collected data for their use in implementing adequate conservation-based programs: **NOT COMPLETED**