

Opportunities for Ph.D. in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation

We are excited to announce admissions to the 2023 Doctoral Program in wildlife ecology and conservation at the Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS). The degree will be granted by the Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE). We are looking for highly motivated and academically driven candidates, with a demonstrated interest in field-based research in wildlife ecology and conservation in India and Asia.

Project Opportunities Available

1. Assessing hunting practices and its impacts on wildlife in the Eastern Ghats

Description: This project aims to study traditional community hunting practices in the Northern Eastern Ghats forest landscape of Andhra Pradesh and their impacts on wildlife, using a mix of socio-ecological field surveys and community interviews. Hunting and illegal wildlife trade are the largest threats to biodiversity in tropical regions. This research hopes to study community practices relating to hunting, quantify its impacts particularly on species that are specifically targeted, and the linkages with wildlife trade. The study will require a use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This research requires extensive field work spanning several months, close interaction with communities, data entry and analysis, and writing. The candidates should be motivated and passionate about conservation, and should be familiar with both field ecological techniques for mammals such as camera trapping and sign surveys, as well as social science survey methods.

Advisor: Dr. Vikram Aditya (CWS)

Co-Advisor: Dr. Krithi K. Karanth (CWS, Duke University)

2. Biodiversity, ecosystem services, and human health on coffee farms

Description: This project will build on existing data on bird and bat communities on coffee farms in the Western Ghats. The study will use mist nets to collect and analyze diet samples from birds and bats in farms that vary along a gradient from sun to shade coffee. Information on diet will be combined with using exclosures to evaluate the effect of agricultural intensification on vertebrate pest control services. Human health risk to farm workers along the diversified farming gradient will be assessed using wristbands that detect pesticide exposure and button thermometers on shoes that measure heat exposure in real time. Together, these data will advance understanding of how farmland diversification/intensification impacts biodiversity-mediated pest control, with potential benefits to human health through reduced need for chemical inputs. Preferred applicants will have experience with mist netting birds or bats, quantitative analysis, strong writing skills, and the ability to work well in partnership with private landowners and farm workers.

Advisor: Dr. Krithi K. Karanth (CWS, Duke University)

Co-Advisor: Dr. Liba Pejchar (Colorado State University)

3. Evaluating Agroforestry Initiatives

Description: This research project will focus on the ongoing evaluation of agroforestry initiatives in the Western Ghats. Building upon our previous research-related pilot surveys and early interventions in support of increasing tree cover within smallholders' agricultural plots within a context of how the frequency of human-wildlife interactions is affected by nearby forests (linking to #4 below). This involves a range of skills: interviewing, implementing surveys, designing those surveys to best assess impacts, economic perspectives on best responses, and econometric analysis.

Advisor: Dr. Krithi K. Karanth (CWS, Duke University)

Co-Advisor: Dr. Alex Pfaff (Duke University)

4. Understanding human-wildlife interactions and evaluating conservation interventions

Description: The research project will evaluate conservation programs that help farmers experiencing wildlife conflict in receiving government compensation. The Ph.D. student recruited for this project will assist in the evaluation of this conservation program. Possible avenues for evaluation are: does the program increase compensation received per conflict incident? Does the program improve attitudes towards wildlife? If the program improves access to compensation, does its implementation reduce incentives to implement private investment in reducing animal conflict? Preferred applicants will demonstrate statistical training and aptitude, experience in program evaluation, and experience in fieldwork. A background in economics is preferred, but not required.

Advisor: Dr. Krithi K. Karanth (CWS, Duke University)

Co-Advisor: Dr. Sumeet Gulati (University of British Columbia)

5. Understanding the role of women in conservation

Description: The doctoral student will examine theoretical and/or exploratory questions about the role of women in conservation leadership. The Ph.D. student will build upon exploratory work done in other parts of the world, examining different dimensions of leadership in India. Preferred applicants will demonstrate a mixed-methods background, with experience in structured survey design, administration, and analysis, as well as qualitative methodologies.

Advisor: Dr. Krithi K. Karanth (CWS, Duke University)

Co-Advisor: Dr. Jennifer Solomon (Colorado State University)

In addition to the positions available in different projects (as stated above), candidates with CSIR/UGC/DST doctoral fellowships are encouraged to apply, provided their interests match that of a Guide at CWS. Typically, most projects are executed in collaboration with faculty from international universities, and national institutions in India.

Essential Qualifications

- Indian national /or OCI, with a postgraduate degree in natural sciences, social sciences, medical sciences, veterinary sciences, or engineering, with at least 65% marks or equivalent, and a minimum of 2 years of experience in field-based wildlife research.

Desirable Qualifications

- Demonstrated ability to write proposals and reports; Publication of scientific and popular articles; Knowledge of survey and analytical methods in ecology; Working knowledge of software such as QGIS/ArcGIS and R. GRE/TOEFL scores.

Fellowship

- Each selected Ph.D. student will get a fellowship of Rs. 40,000, and once they successfully complete the required coursework, qualify for the comprehensive examination, and defend their Ph.D. proposals at the university, the fellowships would get upgraded to Rs. 45,000.

How to apply

- Please fill the format at <https://bit.ly/2023cwsphdapply> to apply.
- Please submit in **one pdf document**:
 1. Undergraduate transcript
 2. Masters' transcript
 3. CV/resume
 4. 1-2 page personal statement identifying your main research interests from the above list (max. 2) and expanding on your relevant experience
 5. List and copies of scientific publications, technical reports, or popular articles published
 6. **Students with other scholarships/fellowships:** Students who have secured the DST-INSPIRE, UGC-NET, CSIR fellowships are also eligible to apply to CWS. These students need not attend the written examination but have to qualify the interviews to be able to get into the Doctoral Program. Please attach proof of such fellowship. Those with a GATE score also need not attend the written examination but have to qualify the interviews. Indicate your GATE score and year of qualifying in the cover letter. **Three referee statements** (should be sent directly to vikram.aditya@cwsindia.org)
- Deadline for submitting applications is March 20th 2023.

Selection Process

Applicants shortlisted based on essential and desirable qualifications would be required to appear for an online entrance test conducted by CWS. Those who have cleared the online entrance test will be invited for an in person/online interview with the Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS), Bangalore. Expenses need to be borne by the candidates themselves.
