



India
Healthy forests, healthy people, healthy climate
News from the Field (July 2022–June 2023)

August 2023
Conservation International

Note: This project is implemented by Applied Environmental Research Foundation (AERF), a non-governmental organization in India.

Restoration of degraded community forests under conservation agreements

Many of the forests in northern Western Ghats are community forests owned by farmers engaged in subsistence agriculture. AERF has engaged in long-term forest conservation initiatives by concluding a conservation agreement with the owners of these forests. AERF's activities have included not only conserving forest lands, but also planting trees in degraded areas to help maintain the health of these community forests. Last fiscal year, AERF planted 1,957 saplings of 29 different native tree species in community forests on land parcels belonging to three different families in Katavali and Kalambaste villages. Community members from these villages that participated were provided with compensation because of the labor-intensive nature of the work.



Plantation of native tree seedlings in Katavali Village (left) and local community members during the activity (right)

The selection of the tree seedlings is done after due consultation with local communities, and we maintain a proper balance in diversity of the species with respect to their economic use for the communities and ecological benefits for the landscape and biodiversity.



Table 1. Type and number of tree species planted in community forests in project villages

No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Kataval (Ghag)	Katavali (Pendharkar)	Kalambaste	計
1	Biwla	<i>Pterocarpus marsupium</i>	50	10	200	260
2	Karanj	<i>Pongamia pinnata</i>	100	50	500	650
3	Arjun	<i>Terminalia arjuna</i>	5	10	0	15
4	Tirfal	<i>Zanthoxylum rhetsa</i>	15	15	0	30
7	Fanas	<i>Artocarpus heterophyllus</i>	10	10	30	50
9	Ringi	<i>Sapindus laurifolius</i>	30	10	100	140
10	Tamhan	<i>Legerstoremia speciosa</i>	0	0	5	5
12	Bakul	<i>Mimusops elengi</i>	0	0	50	50
13	Hirada	<i>Terminalia chebula</i>	10	10	20	40
17	Payar	<i>Ficus amplissima</i>	0	0	2	2
22	Jambhul	<i>Syzygium cumini</i>	10	10	5	25
23	Kokum	<i>Garcinia indica</i>	100	25	0	125
24	Sisam	<i>Dalbergia latifolia</i>	10	10	0	20
26	Shivan	<i>Gmelina arborea</i>	25	20	50	95
27	Cashew	<i>Anacardium occidentale</i>	100	50	0	150
28	Shevga	<i>Moringa oleifera</i>	50	50	0	100
29	Avala	<i>Phyllanthus emblica</i>	100	50	50	200
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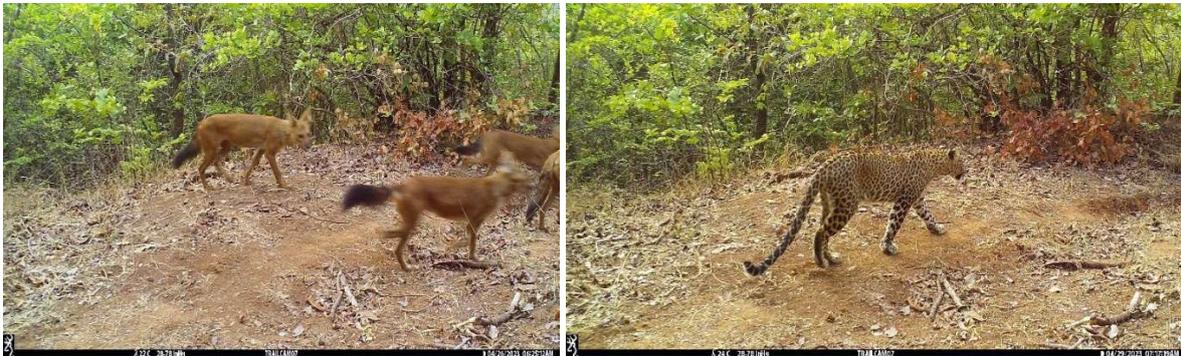
Biodiversity monitoring in forests under conservation agreements

AERF has been using trail cameras for monitoring movement of wildlife, poaching and/or illegal felling of trees by trespassers and presence of endangered species. This has not only helped to confirm the presence of endangered wildlife in forests under conservation agreements, but also communicate the success of conservation efforts implemented in partnership with local communities.

In the last year, AERF conducted monitoring in Wadi Adhishti, Devade and Katavali villages. Trail cameras confirmed the presence of the Indian ground pangolin and Asian wild dogs, both endangered species, as well as Indian Gaur and Indian leopard, both vulnerable species. We have noticed presence of endangered species such as Indian ground pangolin and Asian wild dogs as well as vulnerable species e.g. Indian leopard and Indian Gaur. These results clearly indicate that forest conservation has been successful in protecting rare species of wildlife.



Photographs of wildlife captured by trail camera



Asiatic wild dogs (endangered species [left]) and Indian leopard (vulnerable species [right])



Indian ground pangolin (endangered species [left]) and Indian Gaur (vulnerable species [right])

Training for forest stewards

AERF launched a forest conservation initiative called MyForest in 2008. In the last 15 years, we have brought approximately 8,600 acres (3,480ha) of forests under conservation agreements. When promoting forest conservation activities in cooperation with local community members, it is necessary for residents to understand the vision for the community as a whole, and their roles and responsibilities based on this. For smooth implementation of different conservation activities in these forests, AERF appoints a forest steward in consultation with local communities. We now have a team of 20 forest stewards in 15 villages who play an important role in forest conservation efforts.

AERF provides training for these forest stewards semi-annually. The training sessions provide technical guidance on biodiversity monitoring and record keeping, and share activities and findings with each community. The photos shown below are from a training session held twice last year.



Forest stewards during the training session (left) and visit to AERF's nursery of native trees (right)

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