

disaster management in the sub-region. Several United Nations specialized agencies are also working in South Asia for achieving the targets as laid out in the Sendai Framework for DRR, based on post-2015 development agenda<sup>3</sup>. NDMP further points out India's commitments as reflected in the UN COP21 Climate Change agreement to combat human-induced climate change: 'the Paris Agreement on global climate change points to the importance of averting, minimizing, and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including extreme weather events and slow onset events, and the role of sustainable development in reduc-

ing the risk of loss and damage'<sup>2</sup>. NDMP, in the national plan, incorporates four priorities for action under the Sendai Framework, namely, (i) understanding disaster risk; (ii) strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, (iii) investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience and (iv) enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to 'Build Back Better' in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

While proposing a robust DRR governance framework for the country, NDMP will contribute to better coordination in mitigating climatic challenges, natural hazards and human-induced disasters.

1. Press Information Bureau, 2016; PM releases National Disaster Management Plan; <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=145840>
2. National Disaster Management Authority, India, 2016; National Disaster Management Plan, 2016; <http://bit.ly/29hRgRi>
3. United Nations, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, Geneva: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2016.

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## MEETING REPORT

### For the students, by the students – YETI 2016\*

#### Background

Young Ecologist Talk and Interact (YETI) is a unique conference in many ways. It is one of the few conferences in the world and the only one in India which is organized by the students, for the students in the field of ecology and conservation. YETI has no fixed venue and it travels across the length and breadth of India, going where the team of students takes it. The onus of organizing YETI is totally up to a self-made team of student organizers, who come together and propose this to an ever-increasing group of YETI members.

In nearly a decade, YETI has been able to reach students from across the country. And a reference of YETI without reference to its history would not do justice to the amazing story of 'for the student, by the student conference'. YETI was initiated by a group of students from various institutes in Bengaluru who wanted to organize a national level conference on 'ecology, evolution and conservation'. It started off as a Bangalore city student conference in 2008, and it was called Student Meeting in Ecology, Evolution and Conservation Science (SMEECS), organized in National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS-

TIFR), Bangalore. In 2009, SMEECS expanded to a true national level conference including students from all over India, with a new name YETI, not only to keep the ecology central to this conference, but also to make it more informal gathering for initiating more discussions and interactions. YETI continues to provide platform to students, scholars and researchers to not only share their experiences in academic field, but also to learn from others during this short conference. It also provides them immense opportunity to interact with other researchers and foster any partnership or collaborations to mutually pursue their desired research in the field of ecology and conservation.

#### YETI-Delhi 2016

As Delhi is home to a large number of academic, research and action-related organizations, NGOs and institutions working in ecology, behaviour, evolution and conservation, it was considered desirable to host a national level conference in ecology and conservation in Delhi national capital region (NCR). YETI conference was organized at Amity University, Delhi NCR, from 17 to 20 January 2016. It was one of the largest gathering of students and scholars working towards ecology and conservation in Delhi NCR; more than 300 students, researchers and scholars from 16 Indian

states belonging to numerous institutions, NGOs and universities across India participated. These students and scholars presented studies from across the country in the fields of wildlife ecology, behaviour, evolution and conservation. This year, the highlights of the conference were the 22 workshops, 2 panel discussions, nearly a dozen plenaries and popular talks and about 100 presentations and posters.

#### Plenaries and popular talks

The conference officially commenced on 18 January with a short introduction to the history and concept of YETI by Suhel Quader. The conference started off with plenary and popular talks by many stalwarts and budding wildlife biologists. These included topics related to various challenges and constraints of wildlife conservation, innovative practical mitigation programmes and their implications as well as role of government policies in wildlife conservation and research.

Vivek Menon and Prerna Singh Bindra talked about the innovative methods of conservation action and their insights in the field of conservation. Honnavalli Kumara introduced the gathering to long-term research in primatology. Suresh Kumar shared the success and the challenges related to the long-range migration of Amur Falcons in NE India. Ravi Chellam gave a broad overview about his experience and challenges in translocation

\*A report on Young Ecologist Talk and Interact (YETI) conference organized during 17–20 January 2016 at Amity University, Delhi NCR.

of Asiatic lions from Gujarat to Madhya Pradesh. B. C. Choudhury talked about his journey through research on species biology to conservation planning. Other prominent personalities who shared their experiences in ecology and conservation to media included Tara Gandhi, Amal Kar, Jayant Biswas, K. Ramesh, Jay Mazoomdar, N. P. S. Chauhan, Tanu Jindal, R. Suresh Kumar and Vishnupriya Kolipakam. They shared their knowledge and insight of their field of conservation biology, sociology, bio-speleology, environmental science and natural history.

### Learning through workshops

Workshops are a wonderful tool for imparting hands on training to students and the need for more varied and rigorous workshops was felt in earlier YETIs and thus while preparing the draft programme of the YETI-Delhi, a large part of the conference time was devoted to workshops. The pre-conference day (17 January 2016) was reserved for long workshops, and these workshops were continued in the form of short workshops between talks and plenaries during next three days of the conference. These introduced students to various new fields, sampling methodologies and analytical tools covering both theoretical and practical aspects of field research in the broad aspects of ecology, behaviour and conservation. The workshops were dedicated to discuss the skills necessary for availing research grants, research methodologies, research designing, data analysis and also research communication. Some of the workshops also discussed sampling techniques for different taxa and sampling for molecular level and conservation genetics studies. Wildlife photography is an emerging field of interest in students and a workshop on photography, not only aimed at furthering skills, but also informed them on photography ethics. A workshop on QGIS and R introduced students to the free GIS and statistics application platform. As many wildlife science studies required capturing and release of animals, students were also introduced to these techniques. Animal behaviour workshop focused on the developments in this field of research with special emphasis to methodologies. Many of these workshops also included practical sessions in the campus, thus

imparting hands on training to a group of students.

### Panel discussions

YETI-Delhi also facilitated interaction of a large group of wildlife researchers with government officials to discuss on some pertinent issues related to ecological research and conservation. Samir Sinha, Jagdish Kiswan, Ravi Chellam and K. Ramesh tried to look into the 'forester researcher relationships'. The difficulties, gaps in information sharing and permits have been bone of contention for both researchers and forest officials. It was realized that proper and timely information sharing can benefit this relationship. Along with the scientific research, it is crucial for the scientists and researchers to keep the issues of ethics in mind, and thus one of the panel discussions focussed on 'ethics in ecological research'. B. C. Choudhury, Jay Mazoomdar, Indrani Chandrasekharan, Suhel Quader and Tara Gandhi discussed the various issues concerning ethics of working on wildlife. Jay Mazoomdar highlighted the issues related to the sharing and reporting of information.

### Students' talks and posters

This year many innovative and interesting research works on biodiversity, behaviour, ecology, environmental sciences, human-wildlife conflict, wildlife trade, technology, zoo architecture, social dimensions, etc. were presented and discussed. A student from IIT Madras presented an innovative machine learning based technology for identifying mono-syllabic birds from their call under 'Avipulse' – a students' initiative, that drew attention of the participants toward the excellent merger of technology and wildlife science. Another researcher presented work on 'Analysis of turtle and tortoise seizures in India and Bangladesh'; it drew participants' attention towards present status of illegal wildlife trading between the two countries. Researchers from Nepal presented a study on the habitat, distribution and conservation strategies for river dolphins of Nepal. A student from Bengaluru presented work on citizen science based study of a nocturnal primate in urban habitat. Similarly a plethora of studies focused on lesser known species,

habitats and ecosystems, conflict mitigation, biodiversity and conservation strategies for many species.

### Funding and support

YETI being a student conference is dependent on support from various organizations across India, who share the vision of developing ecological and conservation interest and skills in young students and professionals. This year the conference was sponsored by the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) with support from Tata Trust, Connexio Life Science, Dakshin Foundation, The Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust, and Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF), Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), Amity University, Bombay Natural History Society India (BNHS) and World Wildlife Fund-India (WWF-India). And for the first time crowd funding platform (Indiegogo) was used for YETI, a number of individuals also supported through this platform. The overwhelming support from these institutions enabled YETI-Delhi to provide free accommodation to all the participants and travel reimbursement to all presenters and resource persons.

### The way forward

During the wrap up of YETI-Delhi 2016, students from Baroda and Tezpur University made presentation for taking YETI 2017 to a new venue, with a new student committee. As this conference moves on to a new venue and region, YETI will continue to provide platform for students to present their research work and discuss with colleagues and other researchers in the field of ecology, behaviour, conservation and evolution. Hope the next YETI would attract and provide platform for greater number of students and scholars from across India and will foster collaborations, discussions and informal talks regarding ecology, behaviour, evolution and conservation.

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