



ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

OVERVIEW

Nilgiri Natural History Society endeavours to redefine life, nature and humanity through an ecologically sound and socially responsible value system. It aims to permeate manifestations of actions and thought processes across all walks of life. Inspiration and imagination are core to the Society.

The Society was started in 2010 by a group who have been working in the region of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve for 20 years and are part of Keystone Foundation. The society was launched to include people who believe that ecological societies are possible, where people and biodiversity coexist. The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve is a region, which is alive with these examples, and the society seeks to understand and learn from them.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE YEAR 2018-19

Nilgiris Natural History Society conducted a variety of events in the year 2018-19. Spanning broad themes of engagement with the civil society and educational institutions (within and outside the Nilgiris), we had different kinds of activities - talks, trails, workshops and film festivals for the common citizenry, and conservation education (for students from within Nilgiris) and Nilgiris exposure visits (for students from outside of the Nilgiris). Organizationally, we had a change in our outreach personnel with Anandi Chandran leaving us in February 2018 and Sharada Ramadass taking over the reins from mid-May 2019.

The list of activities undertaken in the last year:

Talks

- **Indigenous People of Nilgiris – a talk by Reverend Phillip K Mulley (9th August 2019)**

Reverend Phillip K Mulley gave an interesting talk and talk on the idea of indigeneity, interactions between communities in the past in terms of lands and culture. On a closing note, Reverend Mulley expressed concern on the eroding of such cultural identities within communities in the modern era of progress and development, stressing on the importance and significance of conserving the linguistic heritage.



- **Mainstreaming Community-led Ecological Restoration (28th August 2019)**

As part of a half-day workshop on restoration, Vasanth Bosco, of Upstream Ecology, had a book reading and a small talk, from and on his latest book, 'Voice of a Sentient Highland'. The natural vegetation of shola forests and montane grasslands helped in maintaining the water cycle and in sequestering carbon, he added. The rest of the event was covered as a workshop on restoration with a panel discussion and planting activities.



Trails

- **Of Davids and Goliaths – a short walk in the Longwood (22nd June, 2019)**

On June 22nd, 2019, with the onset of monsoon, we resumed NNHS activities after a break with a short walk in what is one of the last remnant patch of shola forest within the Kotagiri town area – the Longwood Shola. The birds (prinias, scimitar babblers), fungi (bracket, jelly), red mud crabs, Malabar giant squirrels, the frogs and of course the magnificent shoal trees all provided a treat for the eyes.



- **Intricate weaves – the pastoral landscape of Bikkapathimund (6th July, 2019)**

A walk to and around Bikkapathimund in Ebbanadu, opened our eyes to a whole new world and way of life of the Todas. We were regaled with interesting stories about the mund, and the Toda culture and rituals. Besides sighting pub marks, we were also treated to wild fruits and a wealth of Toda ethno botany. Not to mention, a landscape that took our breath away.



- **An eye for birding – Birdwatching at Mullur (24th August, 2019)**

Bird watching is an art and skill in itself, to be able to pick out the slightest movement of birds amidst the play of light and shade in the canopy. The early morning walk was rewarded with sightings of flocks of fairy bluebirds, great Indian hornbills, Malabar parakeets, not to mention the blackbird, the bulbuls, rufous babblers and hill mynahs. Distant calls of the Malabar whistling thrush reminded us of the landscape we shared with the bird.



- **In search of liquid gold – Semmanarai Bee Safari (31st August, 2019)**

A first of its kind bee safari saw a small group visit Semmanarai and meet with the famed honey hunters of the region who harvested honey from the feared rock bee hives clinging on to precipitous rock faces. The trip also took us to modern day farms and bee keeping initiatives in the region that are providing alternative livelihoods.



Workshops

- **Are you poisoning water? – Organic cleaners workshop (29th June, 2019)**

A half day workshop on how to make organic cleaners with natural biodegradable materials from the kitchen was conducted in Kotagiri by NNHs along with the Kotagiri Citizen's Collective. Live demo for how to make bioenzymes and soapnut solutions were a major hit with the participants.



- **Mainstreaming Community-led Ecological Restoration (28th August, 2019)**

In collaboration with the Millidhane school, and other NGOs in the landscape (Keystone, Karuvi, Beru), a half day workshop on the approaches to ecological restoration was conducted in the school premises. A panel discussion on aspects to consider for community led efforts was a starting point which was followed by planting activity within the school campus.



School Visits

- **International Community School (31st July, 2019)**

Over 60 students from ICS school Kotagiri were taken on a tour of the Keystone campus and explained the numerous aspects of work the organization is involved in with the communities in the landscape.

- **Mount Carmel College, Bengaluru (5-7 Sep, 2019)**

18 Masters students visited us for 3 days during the course of which they got to experience the plant diversity of the landscape, and the ethnobotany of the Todas.

- **GoodEarth School, Chennai (19-21 Sep, 2019)**

29 spirited 10-graders stayed with us for 3 days taking in the landscape in the upper Plateau region from Aracode to Banagudi. They also got to know about Keystone's work in the landscape.

- **Kodaikanal International School, Kodai (30sep-2Oct, 2019)**

55 students accompanied by their teachers spent 3 days getting to know the Nilgiris landscape and how it was similar or different from theirs. They got to explore the Kurumba sacred groves near Banagudi and also undertook half-day field activities on projects in the region under Keystone and Clean Coonoor.





Conservation Education

- **A nursery, for learning (12, 19 July, 2019)**

40 students of 9th standard visited the Keystone nursery as part of a new initiative started by NNHS under conservation education. The learning was hands-on where the students got to know basic nursery techniques

- **Birding Basics (25th July, 2019)**

As part of the conservation education engagement with the CSI school, 10-12 year olds from the middle school were introduced to birding as a way to understand birds. An indoor classroom session, this had the students understand birds from the aspects of their feeding habits and habitats.



Membership and Governance

Membership is invited under the following categories:

- **INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP** – Any individual who identifies with and is willing to contribute to the vision and objects of the society is eligible to apply for membership of the Society by submitting the duly filled in membership form of the Society along with the prevailing annual or life membership fee. The applicant may become a member of the Society upon approval by the Executive Committee. The decision of the Executive Committee shall be final. The annual membership fee for individuals is INR 250 per year and the Life membership fee is INR 2,000.
- **INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP** - Any institution which identifies with and is willing to contribute to the vision and of the society is eligible to apply for membership of the Society by submitting the duly filled in membership form of the Society along with the prevailing annual or life membership fee. The applicant institution may become a member of the Society upon approval by the Executive Committee. The decision of the Executive Committee shall be final. The annual membership fee for institutions is INR 2,000 per year and the Life membership fee is INR 10,000.

Executive Committee/Office bearers

Anita Varghese (President), Meenakshi Venkataraman (Secretary)

Sumin George Thomas (Treasurer), Robert Leo, Pratim Roy, Tina Jagatbir Singh, Samanta Iyanna, Shanta Ravikumar, Clement Godfrey

Staff: Sharadha Ramdass, Coordinator

The bylaws and registration documents of the Society are available online at <http://nnhs.in>

Organisational Information

Nilgiri Natural History Society is registered under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975 (Tamil Nadu Act 27 of 1975)

Registration No. 54/2010

REGISTERED & MAILING ADDRESS

Nilgiri Natural History Society

144-A, Sargan Villa, Club Road,

Opp. Hill Bunk, Udthagamandalam - 643 001,

The Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu

Ph: +914232-2441340/+919442619577

WEBSITE

www.nnhs.in

SOCIAL MEDIA

<https://www.facebook.com/nilgirinaturalhistorysociety/>

<https://nilgirinaturalhistorysociety.wordpress.com/>

E-MAIL

contact@nnhs.in

AUDITORS

J Mathew & Co., Udthagamandalam

