

Book Review - A walk through 50 years of wildlife conservation

Editor - Manoj Kumar Misra

While India celebrates 'Azadi ka Amrit Mohotsav', this book compels us to introspect about our efforts to conserve wildlife and natural habitats in India. The meditations are in the form of articles written by experts in the field of conservation.

The articles are an account of first-hand observations and experiences from fieldwork. Stories are written in an exuberant manner that build anticipation. The absence of jargon and captivating narration makes the book accessible to the general public as well.

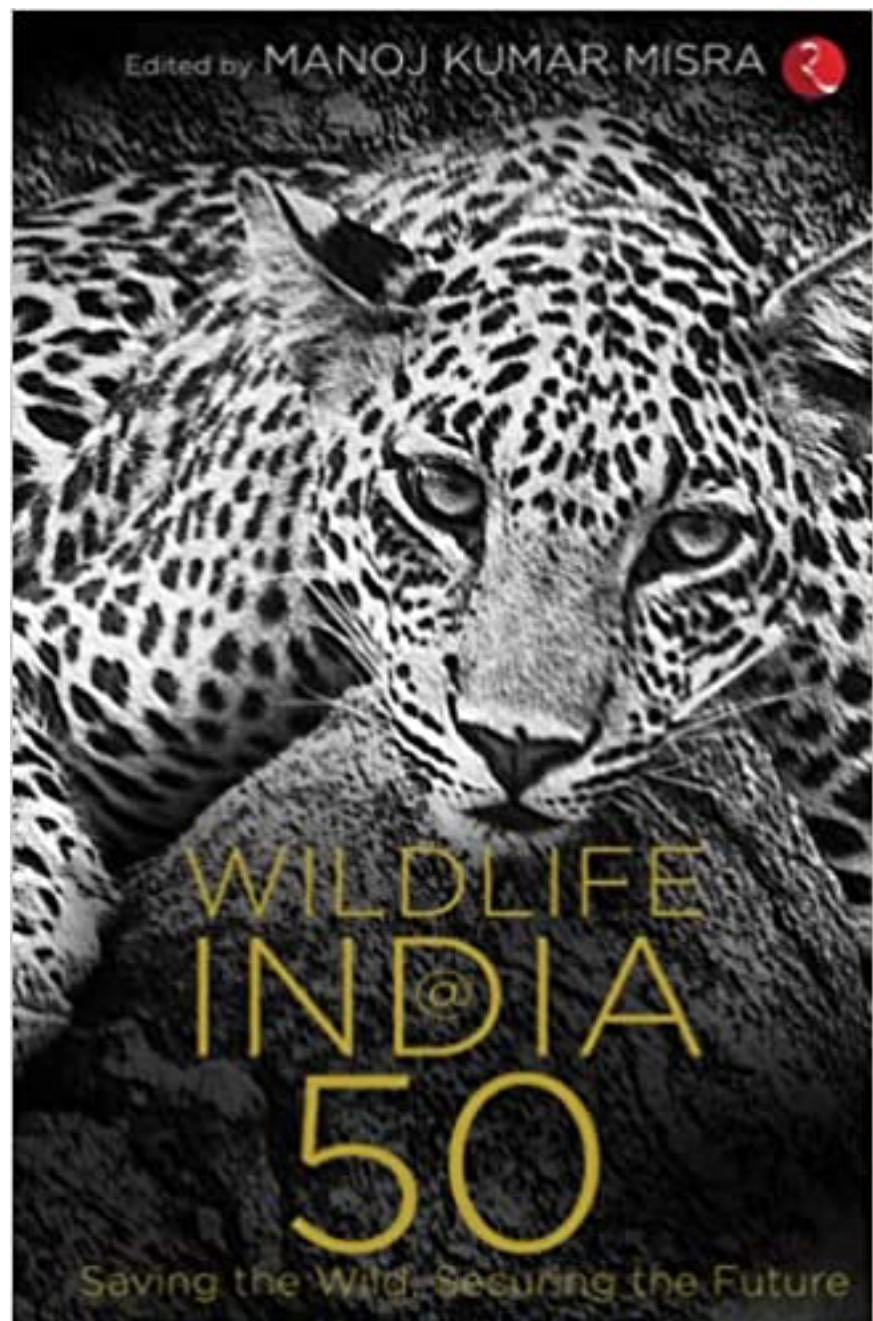
Though individual chapters don't have images, the book gives us a visual treat with 25 photos about wildlife, tribes, and conservationists in India from different timelines. The Book narrates stories about genesis and evolution of wildlife legislations in India and the impact it has on the citizens of the nation.

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experts. It is probably the only book that gives an overview of wildlife conservation in the last 50 years since the establishment of the Wildlife Protection Act in 1972. The book is edited by Manoj Kumar Misra, former IFS, who informs us about the journey of India in wildlife conservation. There are 30 chapters in this book which are divided into two parts:

- Part 1 informs us about topics that are related to the Wildlife Protection Act.
- Part 2 is about people, projects, and institutions working for wildlife.

A short summary of the chapters is presented in the next section.

Chapter 1: Changing shades of wildlife legislation in India

The book starts with a historical narrative of Wild Animal and Bird Protection Act of 1912, Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 followed by amendments in 1991 and 2003. Different political scenarios that occurred and how they affected the Amendment of the act. With a glimpse into the Elephant Project and the establishment of Central Zoo Authority author informs genesis and evolution of wildlife legislations in India.

Chapter 2: Securing Habitats for Ecosystem Revival

Padma Bhushan awardee, Mr. Hemendra Singh Panwar gives the reader an account of the different experiences he has had throughout his journey starting from the positions within the forest department to being the director of Project Tiger.

Chapter 3: Hunting for Answers

With a catchy title Harbhajan Singh Pabla opens a controversial argument in favor of hunting. He advocates hunting of crop raiding species through a regulated mechanism that will reduce human-wildlife conflicts and generate income for rural communities. For managing wildlife, keeping a check on the population is important. The writer compares hunting with alcohol where prohibition has pushed the practice underground.

Chapter 4: How far: long arms of the law

Arvind Kumar Jha gives us scenarios and points out the hypocritical and helpless nature of our legislative system. The author discusses a thrilling case, where an Assistant Collector is found to be involved with wildlife trophies/ skins and tells us to what extent the system is glitched and corrupt. Poor prosecution and conviction have made our wildlife legislation a nicely drafted document.

Chapter 5: Building Bridges: protected areas and people

Vinod Kumar Uniyal explains the politics behind the conservation issues and then chronologically moves to explain the remarkable ways in which they can be resolved. The author gives two other case studies from Parambikulam and Attappady to explain this phenomenon of how people's inclusion is necessary in nature conservation. The author does a commendable job in reiterating the perspective for involving locals in conservation and management.

Chapter 6: Conserving with People: Challenges and Opportunities of

Conservation Reserves, leaves us with the message of the key role that communities play in monitoring ecosystems. Keeping a watch on illegal incursions like poaching and hunting. Locals could be valuable contributors to governance and planning since they possess working knowledge of the forests. Community participatory approaches add emotional connection of locals to wildlife and forests.

Chapter 7: Commerce Most Foul – Illegal Trade in Wildlife

Saket Balota tells us about the sickening greed of humans to possess everything. He critiques India's role in CITES and enforcement challenges in our country. Wildlife trade is considered to be the fourth largest criminal activity in the world and there is a growing demand for wildlife products despite regulations.

Chapter 8: Managing Wildlife in Captivity

Sudha Ramen, talks about the ethical management of zoos in India. The chapter has tedious descriptions of the author's experiences in animal care at Vandalur Zoo.

Chapter 9: Unraveling the Unknown: Researching Chausingha in the Wild

Koustubh Sharma shares his fascination with Chausingha (*Tetracerus quadricornis*), the four-horned antelope; it informs us about behavior, morphology, dietary preferences, and sounds of Chausingha.

Chapter 10: A Life in the Jungles: Wildlife Documentation of Tourism

Joanna van Gruisen narrates her experiences as a wildlife filmmaker. Her engagement in

pioneer and popular tv series 'Survival' is a fascinating read. She gives us an account of the state of wildlife tourism then vs now, the different situations where it helped in conservation, and the future potential it can have.

Chapter 11: From Commerce to Conservation: Saving Crocodiles while Ferrying as a Wildlife Researcher

L.A.K. Singh shares his experiences in the field of crocodile conservation and captive breeding in India. He talks about how technology like radio tracking can help in crocodile conservation.

Chapter 12: Saving Endangered Wild Mammals: Reintroduction Stories from Madhya Pradesh

The author Suhas Kumar peers over the shoulders of a former Indian Government Forest official wherein he mentions his experiences of managing wildlife. To explain the same, the author takes the reader through a long tour of India's Barasingha management program, of which he had been a part. The chapter includes details of the program, the ups and downs met by the program, and the lessons learnt from it.

Chapter 13: Betrayed locals and lions: the story of Kuno National Park

Faiyaz Ahmad Khudsar recollects the time he spent at the Kuno National Park and the role he played in the relocation of the local people who lived at the sanctuary, in preparation for the arrival of lions from Gir. It reflects how the efforts and sacrifices of numerous people have gone to waste due to politics.

The introduction of the African cheetahs is now a result of the failed execution of the reintroduction plan of the lions.

Chapter 14: Wildlife Law and Institutions In Fine Print: Vignettes From My Diary

Ritwick Dutta adds to our perspective of the WPA 1972 by giving an account of Judicial Interpretation and execution of the Law. He starts a narrative by explaining how this Law can be easily misused. A sloth bear from the wild ended up in the zoo only because it was albino. A 'Miscarriage of justice' happened when a bear was framed in crime of human-wildlife conflict and was imprisoned in captivity for lifetime. Even the documents were fabricated to report the Bear as dangerous.

Chapter 15: National Board For? Wildlife (NBWL) Prerna Singh Bindra courageously criticizes National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) and calls the situation 'Great Indian Sale of National Heritage'. The Article informs us about the structure of the Board and its functions and helps us understand loopholes in the system and how politics affects wildlife on the macroscale.

Chapter 16: Incredible Salim Ali

Contemplation of Dr. Salim Ali, the birdman of India, presented by Asad R. Rahmani who talks about the famous ornithologist's childhood and interests. Initially without a formal education Dr. Salim Ali learned on the field and became a rigid supporter for BNHS after 1947, he is credited for creation of Bharatpur Wildlife sanctuary now called Keoladeo National Park.

Chapter 17: In the Wilds: Reporter at Large

In this chapter, Usha Rai takes us through the personal experiences she encountered during her time as an Environmental journalist. She talks about the hardships of being a female reporter in the 1960s.

Chapter 18: More than Bricks and Mortar: Making of WII, Dehradun

Vishwas B. Sawarkar tells us the story of the Wildlife Institute of India, the early years of the Institute, the challenges it faced and how it became the capstone of excellence in the field of Wildlife Science. At the moment WII faces trouble because of the disengagement of funds from MoEFCC.

Chapter 19: Spawning a Generation of Conservationists: Reminisces of WWF-India

Sharad Gaur narrates his journey in the field of nature conservation from mere stipend holder to the being director of the Indira Gandhi Conservation Monitoring Center at World Wildlife Fund for Nature-India. The reader gets information about the programme division Trade Record Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce (TRAFFIC).

Chapter 20: Paradise Regained: Story of the Panna Revival

This is a chapter that invites the reader to be astonished by the circumstances the author confronted while reviving the tiger population in the Panna Tiger Reserve, and the team's enduring efforts to reintroduce and revive the tiger population at the Tiger Reserve.

Chapter 21: Journeys in Arunachal Pradesh

Aparijita Dutta narrates her experiences in an amusing way, her encounters with Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act authorities during curfews, findings while exploration survey of the Leaf Deer (*Muntiacus putaonesis*), and experience with primatologist Anindya Sinha in describing a new species of Arunachal macaque (*Macaca munzala*).

Chapter 22: Shifting sands: diaries from the Gulf of Mannar National Park, Tamil Nadu

Multiple stakeholders express their perspectives about well-known places along the coast of Tamil Nadu. It tells us about the lives of the fishermen community, perspective of a tourist, learnings of seaweed collectors and reflections about development of Rameshwaram.

Chapter 23: Boomerang: When Success Begins To Breed Contestation

Ishan Kukreti highlights human wildlife interactions in Manegaon village where an increasing population of wolves are causing trouble for local people's income sources - goats. The locals have generated resentment towards wolves and the Forest department, so it shows the need for a targeted conflict mitigation approach. Today, Manegaon presents an example of community-led initiatives which has led to an increase in the number of Blackbucks and Spotted Deer and serves as a testimony to good conservation efforts.

Chapter 24: Elephant in the City

Rabindra K. Singh informs us about interactions with humans and elephants in different States and ways to mitigate negative Human-Elephant interactions. The author narrates a thrilling incident where a wild elephant herd (Ashoka dal) came into Ambikapur City, Chattisgarh.

Chapter 25: Survival: The Existential Threat facing the Great Indian Bustard

Sumit Dookia tells us about the conservation challenges of the Great Indian Bustard (GIB). We are informed about the status, ecology, distribution and threats to the GIB. He catches our attention by describing his efforts in engaging local youth of Rajasthan in conservation efforts.

Chapter 26: Four Conservancies Silently Protecting Wildlife in Rajasthan

This chapter presents a narrative about privately-owned lands contributing to



conservation. The experiences are well written and give the reader hope that not every conservation activity requires the involvement of government and that people and private organizations can also bring a change.

Chapter 27: Conservation champions

Ananda Banerjee tells us about popular/ unpopular contributors from different states of India. Notable people who made conservation their personal mission to support the cause of wildlife conservation are listed.

Chapter 28: NGOs in Wildlife Conservation

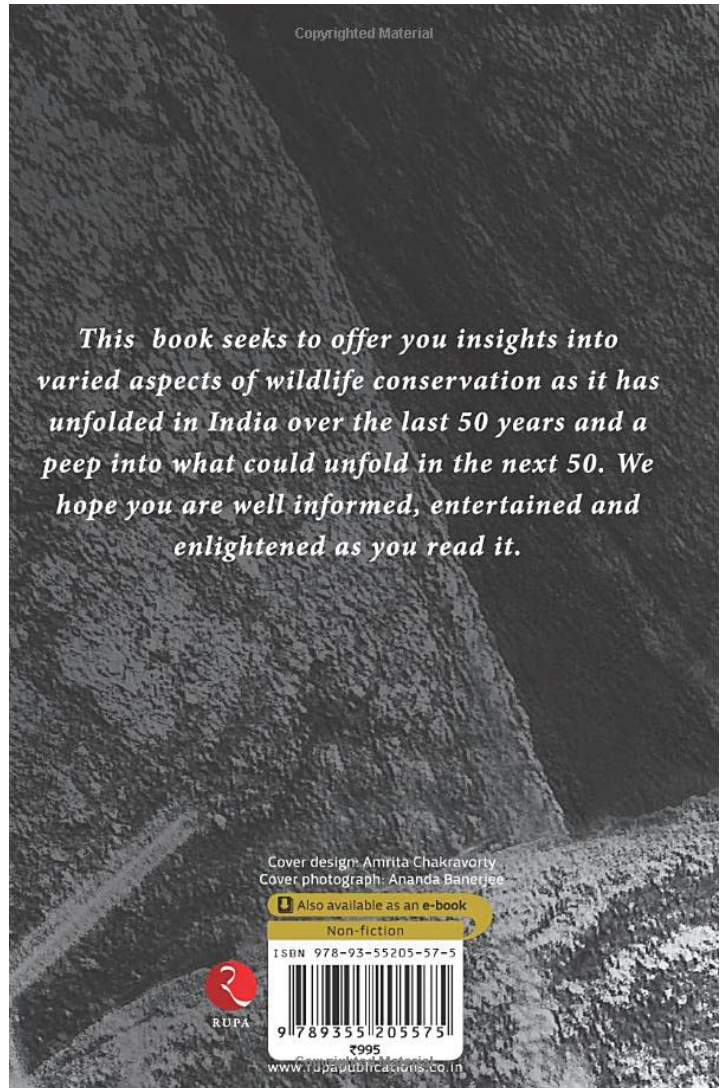
Written by the editor of the book, Manoj Kumar Misra, this chapter gives us a list of non-governmental organizations working for animals in India. This chapter can be resourceful for students, animal welfare advocates, environmental social workers, and fresh law graduates.

Chapter 29: WPA in Climate Altered India

Niveta Khandekar paints a picture of dystopian reality by giving the reader some perspective on plants getting affected by threats like invasives, anthropogenic activities, and climate change.

Chapter 30: Looking into the crystal ball: WLPA of 2072

Neha Sinha probes about future WPA of 2072 and enlightens us about what needs to be changed. The author gives us an optimistic image of wildlife conservation after 50 more



years from 2022 and gives us the opportunity to reflect about key issues such as 'ease of doing business', linear projects conflicting with our dream to conserve biodiversity.

Acknowledgement: We appreciate the opportunity given to us to read the book and reflect on our interpretations at the Ram Hattikudur Advanced Training in Conservation course at Zoo Outreach Organisation. It helped us to learn our wildlife history and reflect on the challenges to be faced as budding conservationists.

Reviewed by Swaathi Na, Lakshmi Ravinder Nair, Tandrali Baruah, Melito Pinto, Rajib Saha, Akansha Mishra, Pooja, Ramdas Patil, Aishwarya S. Kumar, P. Kritika & Soham Parnaik, RHATC 2022–23, Zoo Outreach Organisation, 43/2 Varadarajulu Nagar, 5th Street West, Ganapathy, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu 641006, India.