



## WPSI ACTIVITIES IN THE SUNDARBANS



*A child in the Sundarbans*

The Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) started its community outreach programme in the Sundarbans in 2001. Headquartered on Bali Island, in 24 Parganas (S) District of West Bengal, the programme is run in collaboration with the *Bali Nature and Wildlife Conservation Society*.

The villages that surround the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve are among the most under-privileged in India. There is no electricity, no permanent health care and very few schools. Our aim was to help support the communities living around the Tiger Reserve, and to encourage them to view wildlife and their environment as an asset rather than a threat. With minimal funding, the project has now grown beyond our expectations.

### Awareness

WPSI's project officer, Anil Krishna Mistry, has spent his entire life in the Sundarbans. Anil and his team spread awareness on wildlife conservation issues with infectious zeal and sincerity and assist the local communities in a myriad of issues. WPSI's Tiger Conservation Centre at Bali is used for bi-monthly health camps, and to hold wildlife film shows and village and nature club meetings for the 25,000 inhabitants of the island. In collaboration with the West Bengal Forest Department, we also organise annual events, such as Forestry Week, and football tournaments that are attended by up to 4,000 people. The animosity towards wildlife, largely the result of high incidents of tiger-human conflict, is now steadily diminishing.



*WPSI Tiger Conservation Centre*



*WPSI Serenity Kindergarten School*

A team of volunteers works constantly to motivate the community on environment and health issues, and practical ways to improve their lives and reduce their dependency on the forests.

We run a free kindergarten school for 60 children and recently renovated the Asit Baran high school. Thousands of wildlife posters have been distributed, along with conservation awareness kits to schools that include solar powered colour television sets and a selection of wildlife films.

### Community Health Care

The Bali Community Health Project was started in August 2004 to provide health care to the people of Bali Island. Doctors from Gosaba and Kolkata donate their time and treat hundreds of adults and children at health camps that are held at the WPSI Centre twice a month. A minimal fee of Rs. 20 is charged to partially cover the costs of medicines and treatments. Specialist health camps are also conducted, all of which also promote the message of wildlife conservation.



*Fishlings & crabs are important sources of protein*

## Tree Planting

With support from the Sundarbans Development Board, we have planted over 200,000 mangrove saplings. Most of the planting is done on *chor* land to prevent erosion of the river embankments.

The useful *sundari* tree, after which the Sundarbans is thought to have been named, is fast disappearing in the forests due to increased salinity. We have planted thousands of *sundaris* in village areas, often replacing non-indigenous species such as eucalyptus. The seedlings are prepared in our own nursery.



*Sundari seedlings in our nursery*

## Micro-Credit Scheme

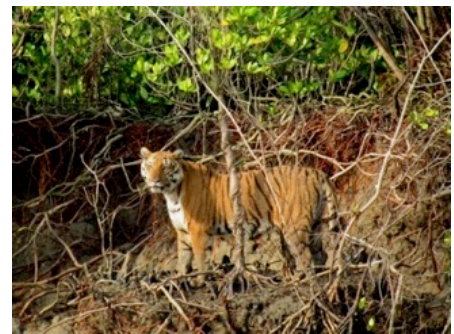


*Embroidery training at the WPSI Centre*

Our Self-Help Micro Credit Scheme benefits the women of Bali. We now have 52 self-help groups with 10 to 15 members each. Group members contribute Rs.30 per month, which enables them to take a small loan from the local Gosaba State Bank to start small business including nurseries, where they produce and sell fruit trees and mangrove saplings. Silk cushions are embroidered for sale in the cities and bags and mats are made from palm leaves. The programme enables the women to contribute to their household incomes and reduces the pressure on forest resources.

## Anti-Poaching

The core work of WPSI throughout India, our team uses a confidential information reward scheme to work with the Forest Department and the State Police to curb poaching in and around the Sundarbans. A voluntary Tiger Rescue Team reacts swiftly to any reports of tigers entering nearby villages and armed with nets and sticks they assist in keeping crowds away from the tiger until the Forest Department arrives on the scene. This has helped save many tigers from a violent and unnecessary death.



*A tiger in the mangroves near Bali Island*

## Rainwater Harvesting



*Rainwater harvesting pond at Bali*

We have assisted in the construction of hundreds of rainwater harvesting ponds on Bali Island; the Sundarbans Development Board funds 90% of the cost and 10% is paid by the beneficiary. Surrounded by mangroves and saline tidal water, the people of the Sundarbans are entirely dependent on these traditional freshwater ponds, which are essential for drinking water, bathing, and as a source of fish. The ponds also provide an income from the sale of duck eggs and the excavated soil is used for growing vegetables and rice fields. Our team also helps coordinate other government infrastructure projects, including the construction of brick paths, boat jetties, solar lights, and tubewells.

## Acknowledgements

*The Serenity Trust generously funded the construction of the WPSI Tiger Conservation centre in the Sundarbans.  
The Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation helps support the running costs of our programme.*

*Please contact us if you would like to help sponsor our programme in the Sundarbans.*



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