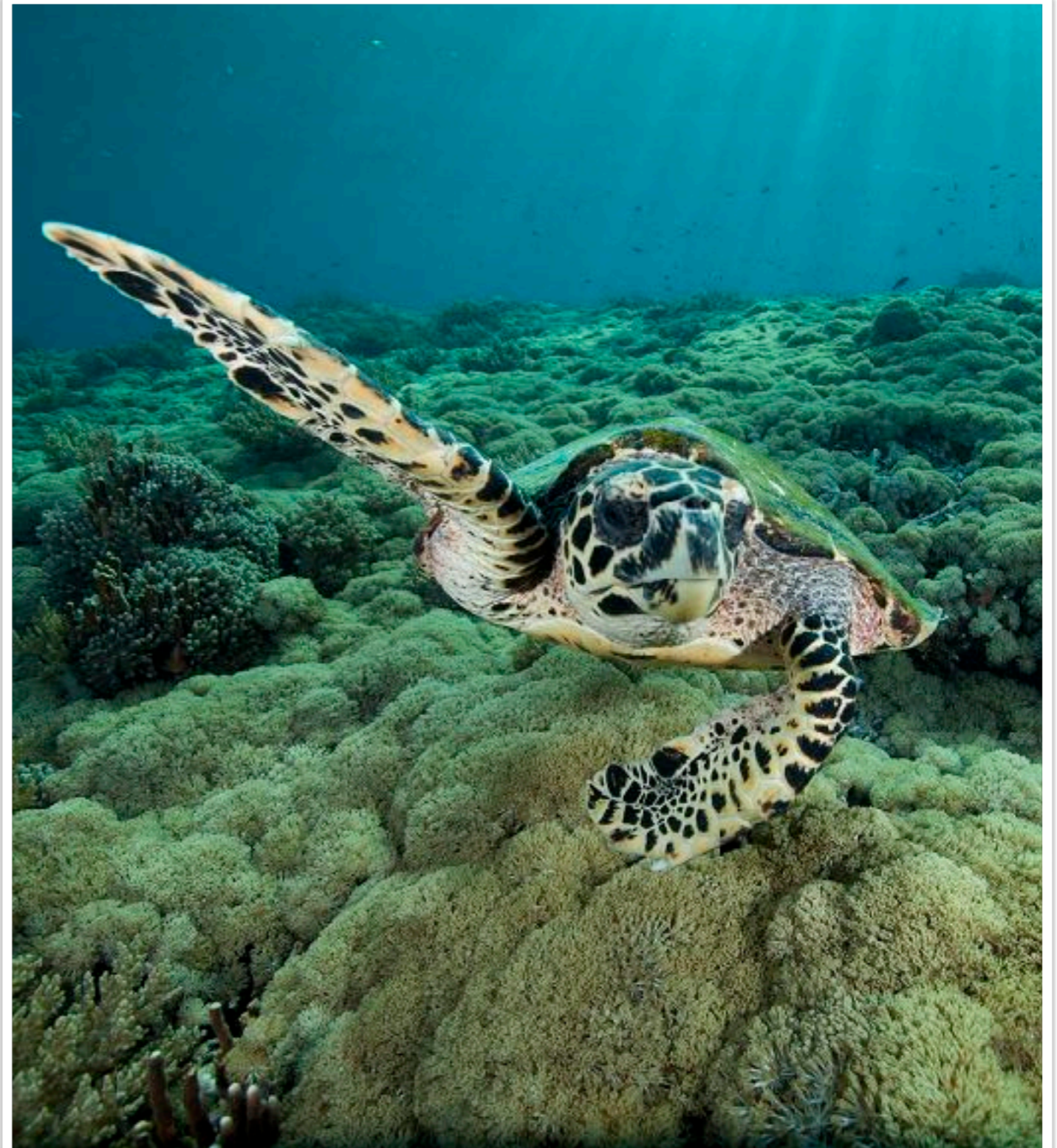




REEFWATCH
MARINE CONSERVATION

Annual Report

FY 2024-25



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Director's Note

Dear Friends, Donors & Ocean Lovers,

It is my pleasure to bring you our Annual Report for FY 2024-25. Looking back at ReefWatch's journey over the past year fills me with a deep sense of pride - for our incredible team of passionate, committed youth and everything they have achieved - and gratitude - for the growing support of our donors, partners and volunteers.

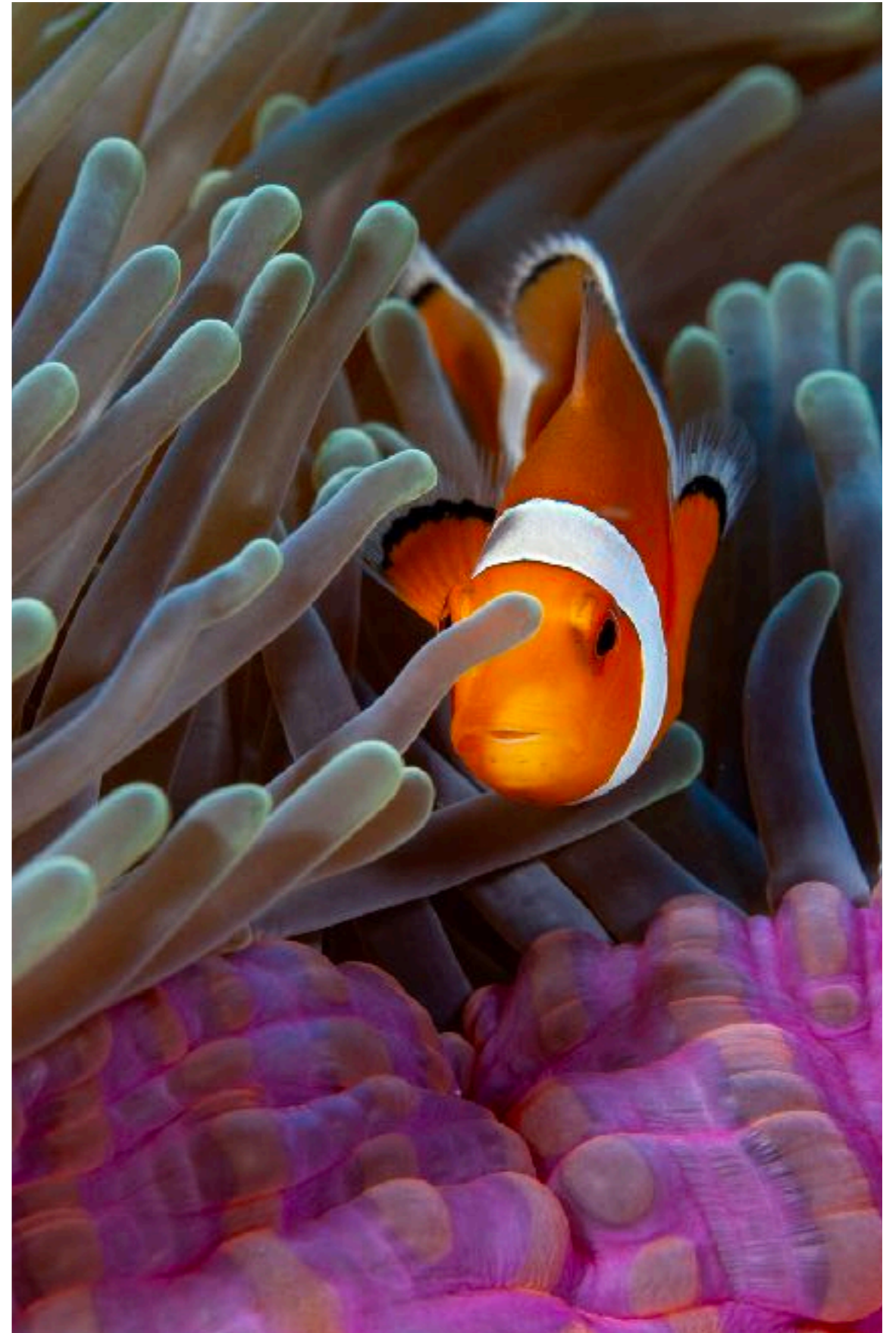
The ocean is a place of mystery and inspiration - but increasingly it is also a place that needs our urgent protection. This year, with a growing team, expanding projects and increased donations, we were able to turn that urgency into impact.

We've secured permits to expand our coral reef restoration efforts, deepened community engagement across our bases, expanded the stranding response program, increased our turtle nest protection and ramped up our ghost net removal program.

I hope you enjoy reading about our progress this year, and that we have your support as we look to the future. We are committed to scaling our efforts, rooted in science, driven by community and inspired by collaboration.

Sincerely,

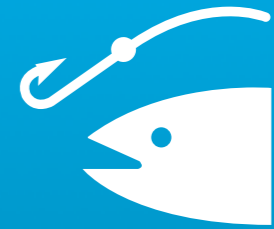
Nayantara Jain | Executive Director



Highlights

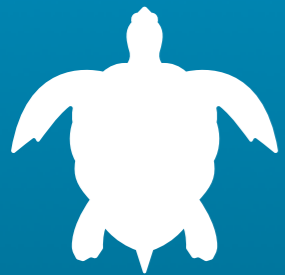


2966 Children reached through workshops, presentations and field trips.



9.5 tonnes of Ghost Nets retrieved

140 new fishermen onboarded



494 Stranding cases attended

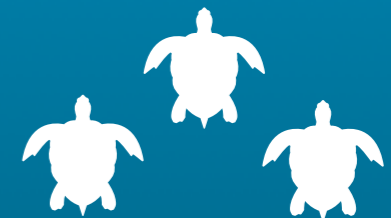
181 Live cases handled



18 Stakeholder Workshops Conducted



12 Press Mentions



14 nests guarded

696 turtle hatchlings safely released to sea.



111 species recorded on restored reefs

Coral growth rate of 8.39cm/yr

Expansion permits obtained



78.6K People Reached

9500 Followers

12.5K Interactions

Restoration & Rehabilitation

“Ecological Restoration aims to recreate, initiate or accelerate the recovery of an ecosystem that has been disturbed” (Nature Magazine).

“Wildlife Rehabilitation is the treatment and care of a sick, injured or orphaned wild animal and it’s preparation for release to a successful life back in the wild “(RSPCA).



REEFWATCH
MARINE CONSERVATION



Active restoration and rehabilitation of marine spaces and species in India is one of our key objectives. We believe that providing treatment and care to individual animals, as well as restoring individual localised habitats, is valuable and impactful despite challenges in scalability. We have three main initiatives under this objective:

1. Coral Reef Restoration
2. Marine Megafauna Stranding Response
3. Ghost Net Retrieval

Restoration & Rehabilitation are vitally important tools for conservation. They help us learn more about the endangered habitats or species, they offer more inclusive tools that allow engagement in conservation and thereby have spill over benefits. While it is no alternative to preventing exploitation or degradation in the first place, honing restoration techniques can help with responding in emergency situations to prevent local extinction.

Timeline

Restoration & Rehabilitation Activities at a glance



Re(ef)Generate: Coral Reef Restoration in The Andaman Islands

“Coral reefs are among the most diverse and productive ecosystems on Earth, providing essential services to both marine and human populations”

A thriving natural reef at the heart of the Coral Triangle, photographed by Sumer Verma

Active since 2019, Re(ef)Generate, in Chidiyatapu in the Andaman Islands, aims to pilot mineral accretion technology and reef restoration in the country.

Our initial objectives included:

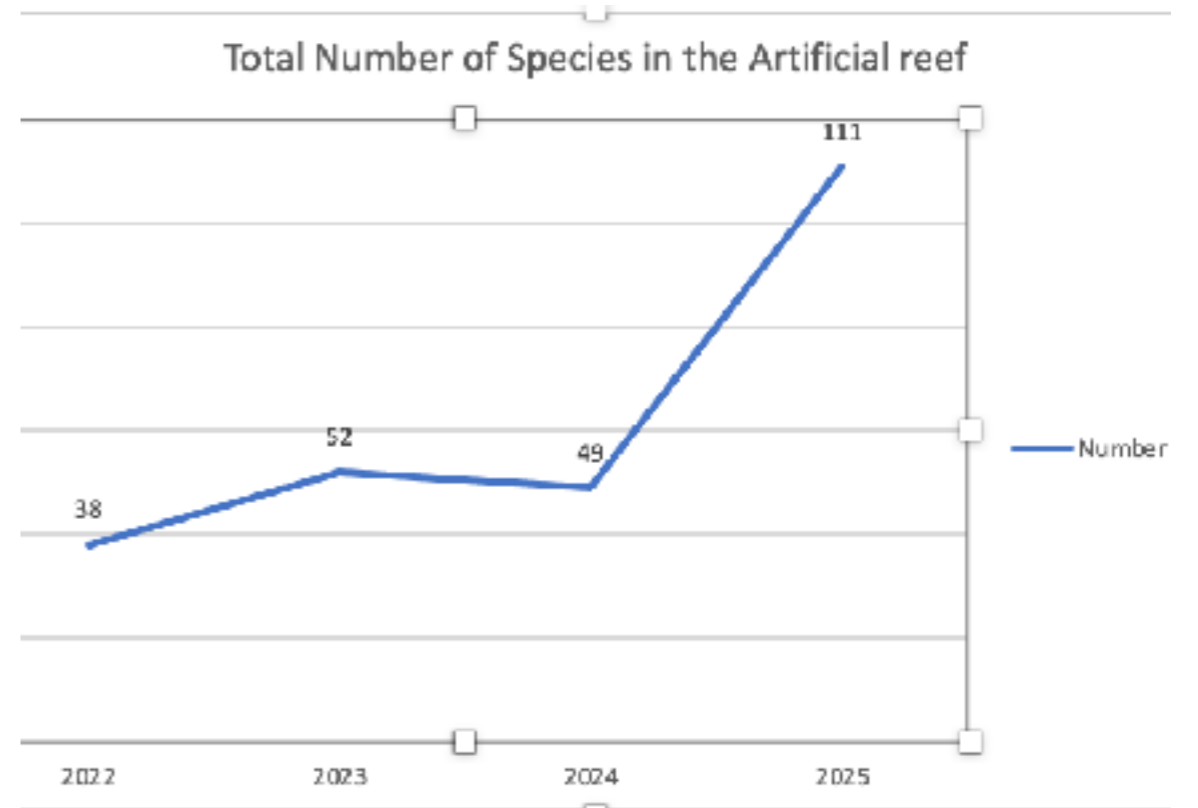
1. Adapting internationally used restoration practices to the local context, to account for in-water factors such as commonly found coral species/ morphologies, local challenges such as siltation, sponge growth, currents, etc, as well as land-based factors such as availability of equipment & technology, the capabilities of local boats and so on.
2. Building awareness & capacity to improve the human resource landscape in which we were operating.
3. Using our learnings from the pilot project to expand the initiative independently as well as through guiding/ consulting other organisations/ government departments.

The focus of our ongoing conservation efforts is the restoration and protection of coral reefs, particularly in regions like the Andaman Islands, which are home to some of the most diverse coral ecosystems in the world. As part of our Re(ef)Generate initiative, we have dedicated our resources to active restoration, rehabilitation, and the implementation of adaptive management strategies that will enhance the resilience of these ecosystems. These efforts include coral transplantation, habitat restoration, and comprehensive monitoring to track the progress of our interventions. A core element of our strategy is the empowerment of local communities, who are recognised as stewards of their environment. By providing education and practical tools, we aim to engage these communities in conservation activities, creating long-term partnerships that enhance both their livelihoods and the health of the reefs.

Last year was a challenging one for reefs across the world, the planet experienced record breaking ocean-temperatures and NOAA confirmed that the summer of 2024 was the 4th global coral bleaching event on record and the second in the last 10 years.

In response to these challenging weather conditions, we implemented several modifications to our restoration approach to enhance stability and effectiveness. One primary objective was to increase the efficacy of our mineral accretion device. To better withstand turbulent seas and strong winds - something that occurs repeatedly on the islands - we altered the float's shape from a flat-bottom design to a semi-spherical, rounded


bottom. This new design improves the structure's buoyancy and resilience against the fluctuating water movement. Additionally, to further ensure stability, we fabricated four custom-made anchors, each weighing approximately 300 kg. With the invaluable assistance of the local community, these anchors were strategically deployed in four directions, securing the float from all sides. Each anchor is connected to a heavy chain, providing sufficient length to accommodate both high and low tide variations. These adjustments have greatly improved the float's ability to withstand environmental pressures, allowing our restoration efforts to continue effectively even in adverse weather conditions.



Growth of Biodiversity at the restoration site



Marine Megafauna Stranding Response Project: Goa & Karnataka Coasts



“Marine megafauna refer to large vertebrates inhabiting the ocean. Their importance lies in their roles as top predators, nutrient transporters and ecosystem engineers, playing a crucial part in maintaining the health and balance of marine ecosystems. At ReefWatch we work primarily with sea turtles, sea birds and cetaceans.”

Sea turtle in the blue, photographed in the Andaman Islands by Sumer Verma

Marine megafauna strandings - where marine animals wash up dead or alive on the beaches - are increasingly frequent along India's coastline. These incidents can result from natural causes or more commonly from human-induced threats such as vessel strikes, fishing gear entanglement, pollution, disease, and noise disturbances from coastal construction.

India's biologically rich coast supports diverse marine life, but growing pressures like overfishing, plastic waste and habitat degradation are disrupting ecosystems and contributing to a rise in strandings. Many cases go unreported, emphasising the need for a structured response system.

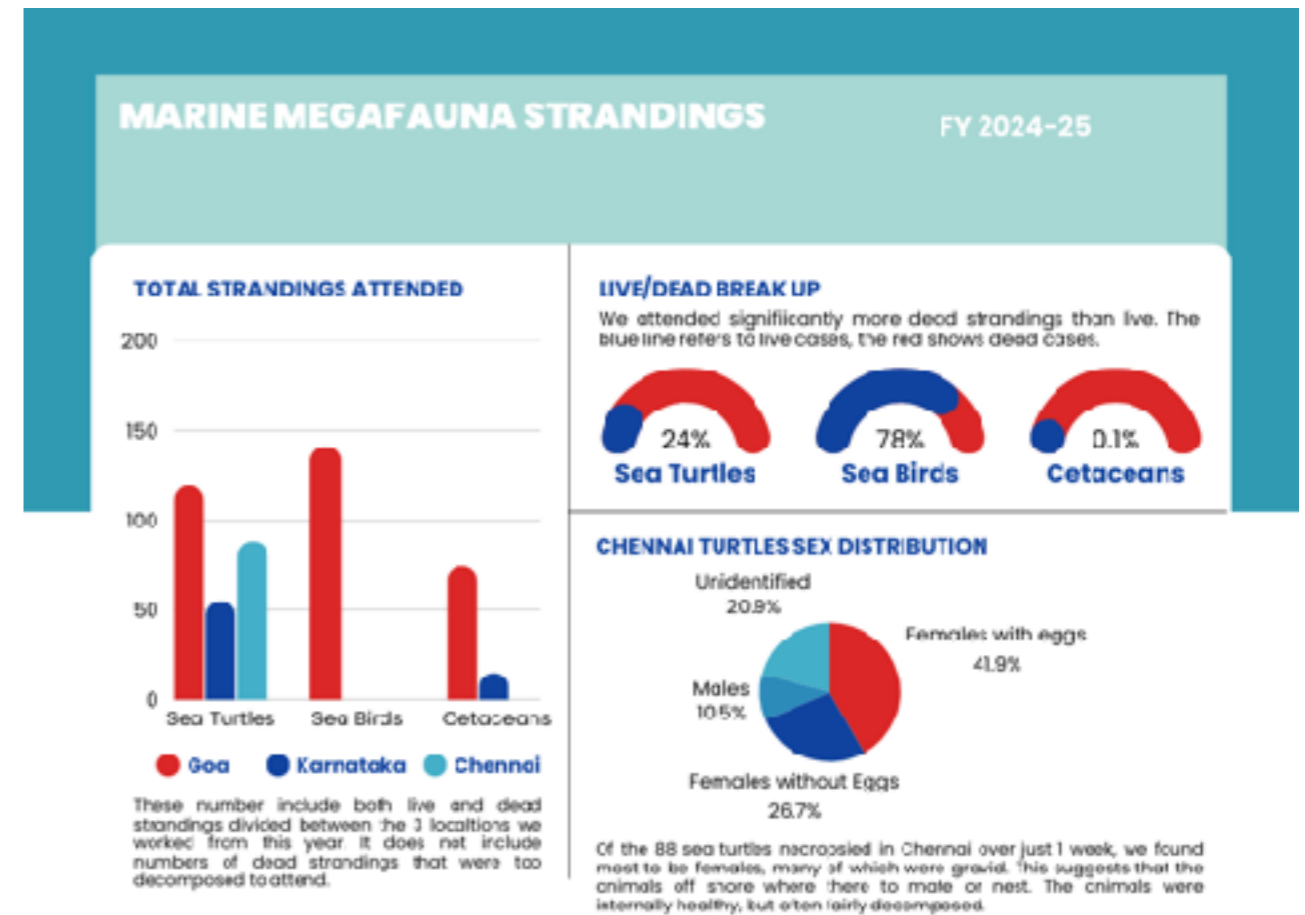


Since 2019, we have been operating a marine megafauna stranding response network in Goa and Karnataka, documenting and treating strandings of sea turtles, cetaceans, and seabirds. Our project aims not only to rescue and rehabilitate marine wildlife but also to gather valuable ecological data and engage local authorities and communities in conservation.

In FY 2024-25 our teams attended to 494 strandings. While the reported number was a lot higher, several of the cases were dead animals in advanced stages of decomposition. Of the 494 cases, 336 were from Goa, 70 from Karnataka and 88 were from a mass stranding event in Chennai during nesting season that our team was called to attend to on an emergency basis.

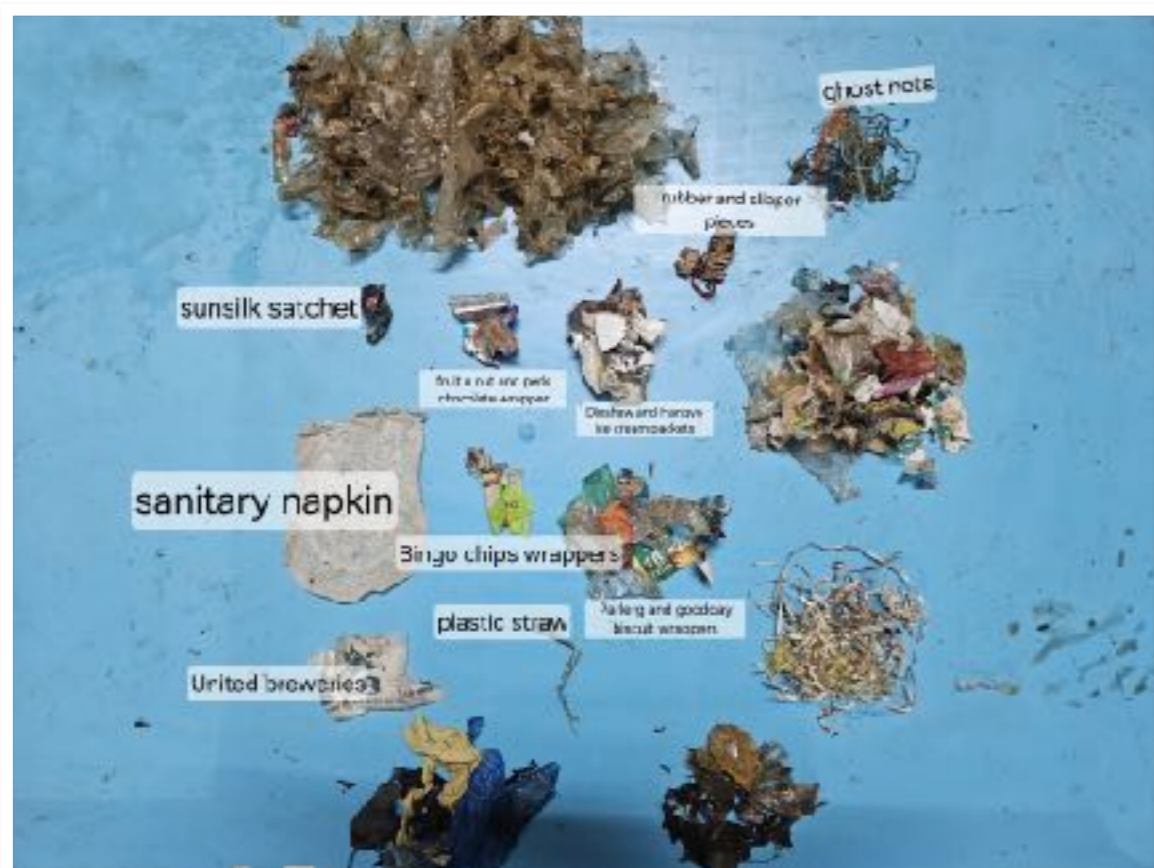
Of the 336 cases from Goa, 173 were live cases - 134 of which were sea birds and 35 were sea turtles. Of the 70 attended strandings from Karnataka only 8 were live cases, and all of these were species of sea turtles.

This year our team was invited to Chennai by the Tamil Nadu Forest Department to attend to a mass mortality event of sea turtles. Within a few days from when the strandings began, a team of 5 people made up of our Karnataka and Goa staff arrived in Goa to begin necropsies and determine cause of death. In only 6 days of work, our team necropsied 88 turtles. They determined that most of these were female (59) and many with eggs.



Given the excellent internal health of most of the dead animals, combined with their advanced rate of decomposition, we gathered that they had died a few days previously and probably slightly off-shore. The state of their internal organs suggested that rather than having died of any illness, it was more likely a sudden injury - such as drowning by becoming caught in fishing gear. The large number of these turtles together with their injuries, suggested this happened by illegal trawling vessels encountering a large gathering of sea turtles in the same region (aggregated for the purposes of mating and nesting) and accidentally capturing them in their nets. Upon discovering the protected species dead in their nets, they likely cut them lose for fear of repercussions.

Entanglement in fishing gear and plastic ingestion was seen in several animals that we have treated or post-mortemed at our permanent bases also. Of the dead sea turtle strandings we attended to, 57% were found with foreign objects (plastic net, wrappers, etc) inside them. 28.5% of the sea turtles under our treatment excreted foreign objects over the course of their treatment. Green sea turtles as a species were most likely to have ingested plastic during their lifetime, possibly due to their feeding habits. Some of the other frequent mortality causes this year have been Blunt Force Trauma, Parasitic Infestation, Drowning & Asphyxiation and Chronic Starvation.





Top: Enclosure built around nest for protection; Bottom: Baby sea turtle



Our team is also involved in sea turtle nest monitoring close to our base in Kundapur. From February onwards we begin to witness Olive Ridley females come to the beach to nest. These beaches are frequented by the locals and tourists alike, and often have predatory pressures from stray dogs and poaching. In an attempt to boost the populations of these endangered animals, our team, in collaboration with the Karnataka Forest Department, tracks turtle nesting, guards the nests and then conducts round-the-clock monitoring as each nest comes close to the expected date of hatching.

This collaborative effort includes not only the Karnataka Forest Department and ReefWatch, but also local fishermen who assist with locating the nests and a big team of volunteers who stay at our Kundapur base and assist with all-night beach monitoring of the nests when they are very close to hatching as well as guiding the hatchlings safely to the sea.

This year our team successfully located and guarded 14 Olive Ridley Sea Turtle nests, leading to the safe journey of 694 baby turtles into the sea. The nesting season began in early February and end with hatchlings from the last nest making their way into the ocean by the first week of May.

Volunteering during this time was seen as tiring, yet rewarding experience for everyone who came.

Ghost Net Retrieval Project

"Ghost nets are lost or abandoned fishing nets, traps, or other gear that continue to fish for, ensnare or drown marine life even after they are no longer used by humans. These nets can be found drifting in the ocean, snagged on reefs or on beaches. They pose a serious threat to marine life, causing entanglement, injury and death."

Damaged net buy-back benefits both the marine environment and artisanal fishers

We began a Ghost Net retrieval project in Karnataka in June 2023, with the long term aim of actively addressing some of the key causes of stranding and marine megafauna mortality. Through this initiative we deter the flow of damaged fishing nets into the ocean by incentivising fishers to sell the nets to us instead. We also collect such plastic debris that washes up on beaches through beach clean ups and reporting systems. To date we have stopped 9.5 tonnes of damaged fishing nets from

entering our ocean. These nets are brought to one of our two processing areas (Kundapura or Honnavara) where they are cleaned, segregated and stored by a team of 8 local women. Through an innovation challenge (discussed in Outreach section) and collaborations with companies we are looking for community based, low tech up-cycling solutions for these monofilament nets.

Education & Outreach

“Armed with knowledge we have power. That is the best cause for hope” - Dr. Sylvia Earle

At ReefWatch we believe that Education and Outreach are at the heart of conservation, and that no where is this more true than in efforts to protect our marine and coastal habitats. The vital, biodiverse and vast world that lies beneath the opaque surface of the ocean is often ignored and forgotten by the general public as much as policy makers and others in positions of influence.

All our projects have an Education & Outreach component and through this we target school students, fisher folk and coastal communities, government staff, life guards and other NGOs/ CSOs. We also post regularly on social media to reach a wider audience and honour our donors and partners.



Timeline

Education & Outreach Activities at a Glance

“...after a lifetime of exploring our planet, I remain convinced that the more people enjoy and understand the natural world, the greater our hope of saving both it and ourselves becomes”
- Sir David Attenborough



EDUCATION & AWARENESS

JUN 2024

Goa: Two training sessions were held for Driшти Life Guards

Karnataka: Celebrated World Ocean Day at the ICC event at Marvanthe

AUG 2024

Goa: Conducted 6 training sessions with 268 Driшти Lifesavers and 8 North Goa Forest Dept staff; developed a Sea Turtle Handling booklet

OCT 2024

Andamans: Celebrated 70th Wildlife Week with a Grub Island cleanup and supported ANI Forest Dept's artificial reef installation.

JAN 2025

Andamans: Conducted 3 Ocean Arts Sunday sessions, including a beach cleanup with local kids, Pondicherry University students, and tourists

Goa: Presented on Goa's pelagic birds and their threats at a Bird Festival to 69 students and 13 Forest Dept staff

MAR 2025

Goa: Conducted veterinary training (19 in-person, 144 online), developed a seabird handling booklet, and ran 2 Coastal Guardians sessions in Goa (33 students)

Andamans: Conducted 3 OAS sessions and a finale themed "Voyage to the Depths"

APRIL 2024

Ocean Art Sundays (OAS) conducted a session themed "Guardians of Blue" at Andamans

JUL 2024

Goa: Treated 65 animals and released 6 turtles; conducted 12 post-mortems

Karnataka: Documented 6 strandings and among them were 3 live strandings

SEPT 2024

Goa: Conducted 6 training sessions with 273 Driшти Lifesavers and 22 South Goa Forest Dept staff.

DEC 2024

Andamans: Ocean Arts Sunday's Session Launched - "Voyage to Depths", conducted 2 sessions

Karnataka: Conducted two community engagement events during the holidays

FEB 2025

Andamans: Conducted four OAS sessions, including a mangrove and kayaking activity; 5 school workshops in Port Blair in collaboration with Jnana Foundation

Goa: Conducted Coastal Guardians Workshop with 7 in-person sessions (292 students) and 1 online session (10 students)

END OF FINANCIAL YEAR

Children's Programs: Andamans, Goa & Karnataka



Across our bases we engage with young people from all strata of society. We do this in diverse ways - from long term engagements which involve outdoor sessions on the coast to one-off workshops in classrooms - hoping that a glimpse, a story, an idea from the ocean can be the catalyst that inspires positive change.

In the last Financial Year, across our bases, we have engaged with 2966 students between the ages of 10 and 18.

Our modes of engagement have been:

1. Ocean Arts Sundays: A free of cost, out of school program for underprivileged coastal children to interact with the ocean in a meaningful way. This program combines a conservation message with life skills like communication, team work, fitness and confidence. As part of this program, children who wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity get to snorkel, dive, kayak and fall in love with the sea.

2. Island Ecology Excursions: This program brings children from the mainland of India to its coasts and islands. We work with schools to create a program that fulfils part of their syllabus requirements in the living classrooms that are mangroves, beaches, coral reefs and forests. Through this immersive experience, young people from the city forge a connection with the natural marine world that we hope will last a lifetime.

3. Coastal Guardian Workshops: We brought the ocean into the classroom with this workshop - introducing children to the interconnectedness and interdependencies in the ocean as well as the importance of a connected, collaborative spirit when it comes to its conservation - using a short film made for us by the impact team of the Turtle Walker Film. We used the film, along with a presentation and a hands-on interactive activity, to highlight the need for marine conservation and the role that every single individual can, and must, play in it.



Stakeholder Group Outreach: Goa & Karnataka Coasts



Apart from general awareness building outreach activities, we also conducted targeted workshops for fishermen, Forest Guards, Lifeguards and Veterinarians.

Our Veterinary Workshop focused on teaching vets and vet students the intricacies of handling, treating and conducting necropsies on marine megafauna. Around 22 veterinarians attended the workshop in person and 144 attended online. The

aim of this workshop - conducted once every year, is to increase capacity in the country to treat and handle marine megafauna - an aspect often ignored in veterinary colleges in India. The topics covered included legal aspects of handling Schedule I Protected animals, first response and physical handling of sea turtles, sea birds and cetaceans, treatment protocols for common ailments/injuries as well as necropsy techniques with a live demonstration.

Another important stakeholder group targeted this year were the Drishti Marine Lifesavers - Lifeguards that cover every beach in Goa. A total of 541 Lifeguards were trained over 12 workshops across the state in first response procedures for injured sea turtles, sea birds and cetaceans. We work closely with the Lifeguards in Goa, who are the primary reporters of stranding events. Timely reporting and correct first response on their part goes a long way in ensuring the proper treatment and eventual release of the animal. In this workshop we covered handling techniques, crowd management and reporting to ensure the safety of the Lifeguards as well as the wellbeing of the marine animal until the arrival of our team. Drishti Marine is a valued partner and collaborator of the stranding project in Goa.





As part of our Ghost Nets Retrieval project we have cultivated longterm relationships with the fisher communities in Karnataka. This year we added 140 new fishermen beneficiaries to our program. We also hired 12 new team members from the local fisher communities of Honnavar, Kundapura and Navunda. Apart from engaging directly with the fishermen, we also organise community events, beach clean ups in areas frequented by fishers, put up street theatre shows about marine conservation in local languages and conduct workshops in schools their children attend. The aim of these initiatives is not only to expand the net retrieval program but also to inspire a conservation mindset in this key demographic and empower them to sustainably use their natural heritage.



The Ghost Net Innovation Challenge



To tap into the creativity of young innovators and tackle the difficulties involved in up-cycling monofilament nets (the majority of our collections from the Ghost Net retrieval project), we launched an Innovation challenge open to students studying in the field of design or engineering.

We announced the Challenge in December 2025, and promoted it through talks at educational institutions that also raised awareness about the dangers of plastic pollution in our seas.

The challenge was to innovate a solution for community-based up-cycling of monofilament nets along with a prototype, manufacturing processes and a basic business strategy. The shortlisted applications would have the opportunity to present their product to a panel of

judges and the winning proposals would receive prize money of Rs. 1 lakh. We had enthusiastic participation - teams from 16 different colleges applied in the duration of 2 months.

On the weekend of 15th & 16th March, the shortlisted teams came to Kundapur to present their products. The solutions were diverse and creative - we had ideas that ranged from lightweight construction bricks using shredded nets instead of fly ash to weaving the nets into DIY Jewellery Stand kits.

Our judges - a panel comprised of recycling industry experts, conservationists and funders - had a difficult and interesting time shortlisting the winning ideas showcased next.

A team from Atlas University - Anushka and Gyzel - used 10 kgs of nets to create quilted monofilament padding that they showcased in the variety of products - from puffer jackets to bags to blankets. The judges tried the products on and found them to be comfortable and showing great potential in scalability, design and feasibility. The girls won the 1st prize in the challenge.



The 2nd prize went to Parth Amlani who used a combination of nets and natural fibres in varying proportions to create cushions, pet beds and travel pillows with multi-layered architecture (core, transition, comfort).



Washing the fishing net



Sanitizing and boiling- for further cleaning and breaking down



Straining and then drying



Innermost layer- 90-95% cotton



Working in the Carding machine



Blending cotton for the first core layer



Blending cotton for the second transition



Middle layer- 60% monofilament net



Stitching layers in pillow



Stitching



Manual tamping the pillow



Outermost layer- 90% monofilament net



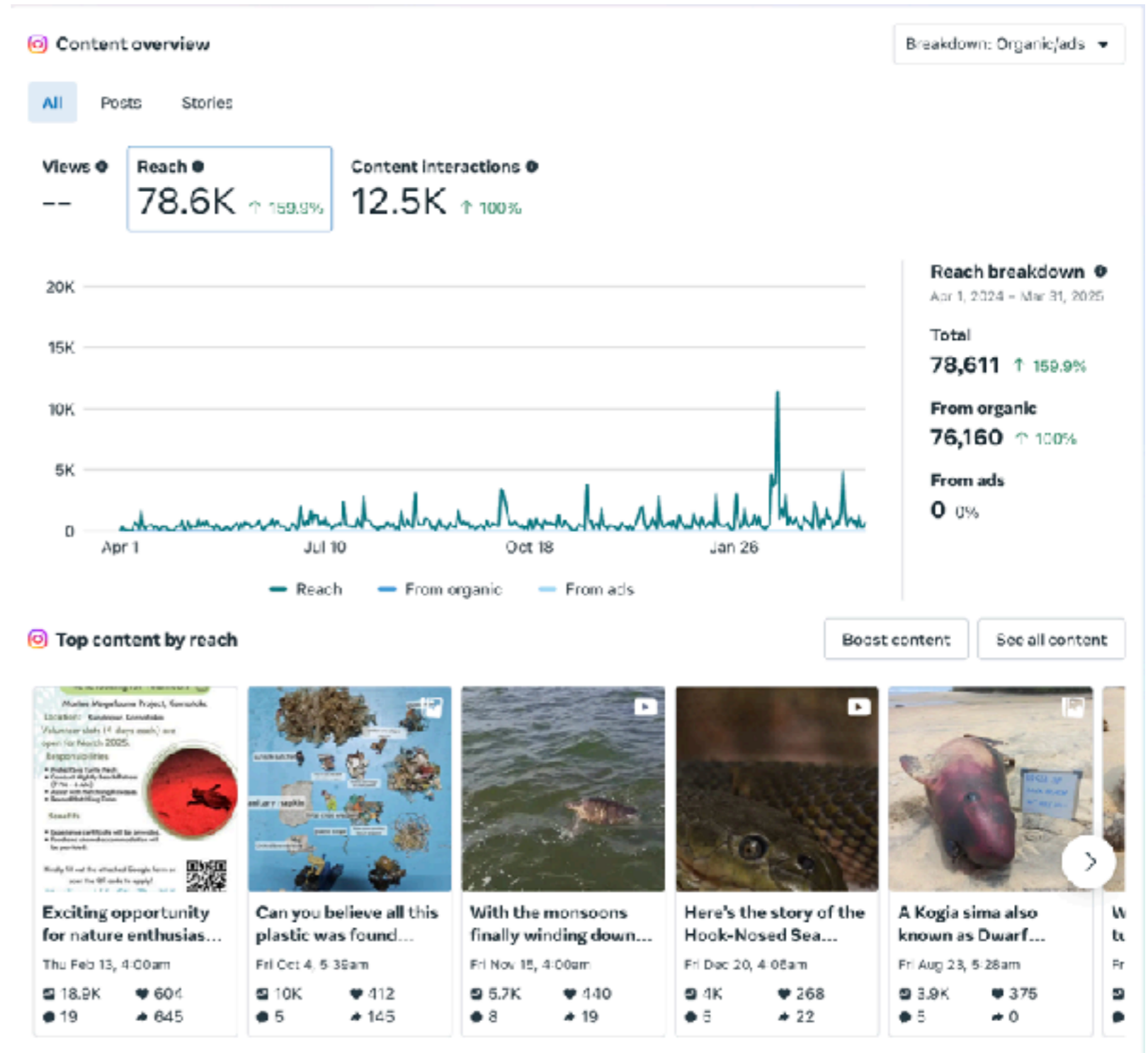
Social Media

We have been consistent with our social media messaging this year, with a clear schedule through the week that has covered each of our projects on a fixed day. We also include points of interest such as Trivia Tuesday and a Sunday Quiz that is much loved and anticipated by many of our followers.

We currently have 9500 followers. Our reach has been 78600 people this year, and we have had 12500 interactions with our content. This has all been organic growth, with no paid promotions.

We also use our social media to advertise for full time roles, volunteer opportunities and internships.

Further all our donors get regular mentions on our social media. While our focus has been mainly on Instagram and Facebook so far, we hope to ramp up our activities on LinkedIn this year to access a more professional audience and potential donors.



Our Donors



Siddhartha Lall
Trust



We thank our individual donors / Rs. 5 lakhs or less: Trident Automobiles, Parth Amin, Tushad Bahadurji, Tushar Gogia, Eesha Shetty, Nandita and other anonymous donors.

Board of Trustees: Working Committee



Mitali & Prahlad Kakar, Co-founders



Tarak Patel, Board Member



Sumer Verma, Board Member

Ms. Zia Nath, Capt. Kamal Mohan and Mr. Anees Adenwala are the non-office bearing Trustees on our Board.

Management Team



Nayantara Jain, Executive Director



Dr. Shantanu Kalambi,
Project Manager



Dr. Suranjana Ganguly,
Chief Veterinarian



Anjili Sarah Mathew,
Operations Manager

Field Teams

Project Coordinators:

Dr. Sangamesh Uday

Tanuj Mark

Arpita Dutta

Rutuja Bansod

Outreach Officers:

Jodanne Pereira

Venketesh Sheregara

Aditya Salvi

Project Officers:

Arjun Trikannad

Rachna Subramaniam

Yogendra Naik

Veterinarians:

Dr. Manohar Nagare

Dr. Prashant Kumar

Ghost Net Processors:

Rathna

Jyothi

Jyothi Paresh Tandel

Kusuma Narayana Tandel

Sujatha

Field Assistants:

Nagaraj

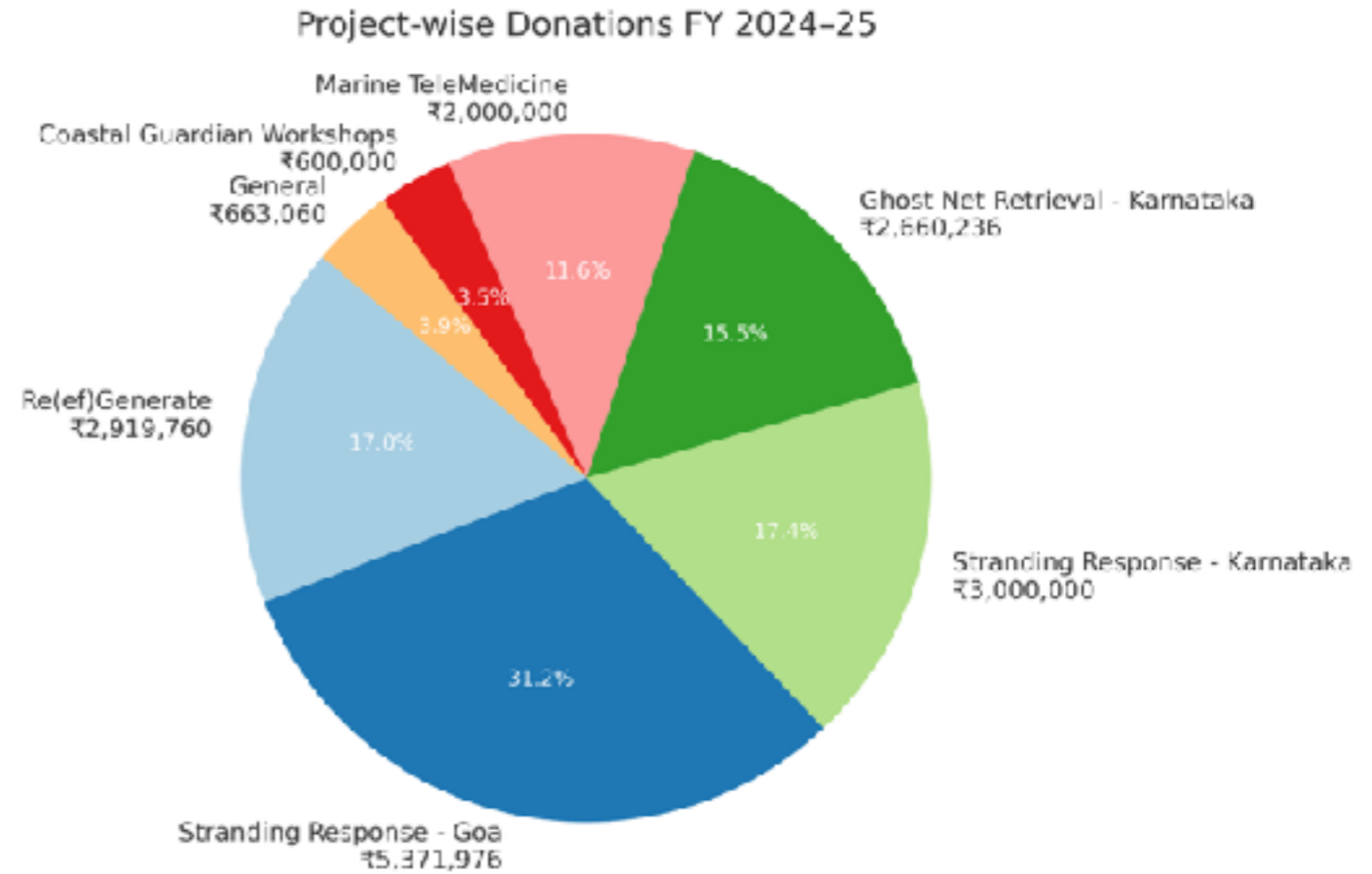
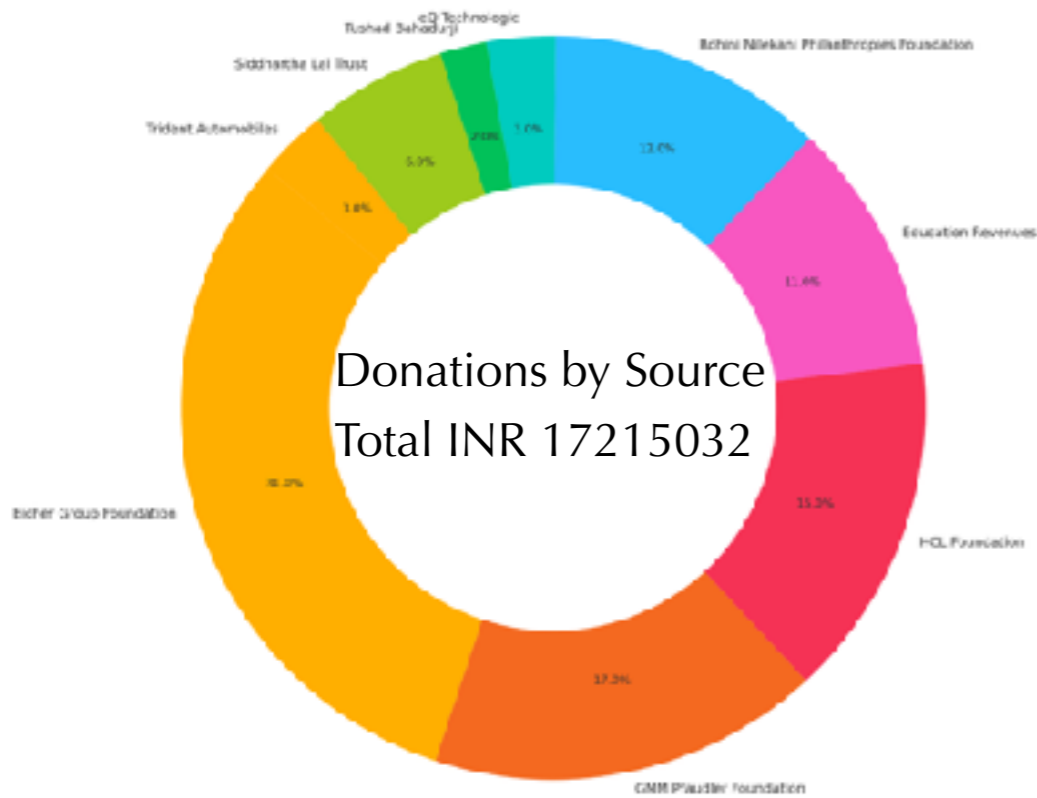
Sandesh Naik

Anand Minj

Sanjay Lakra

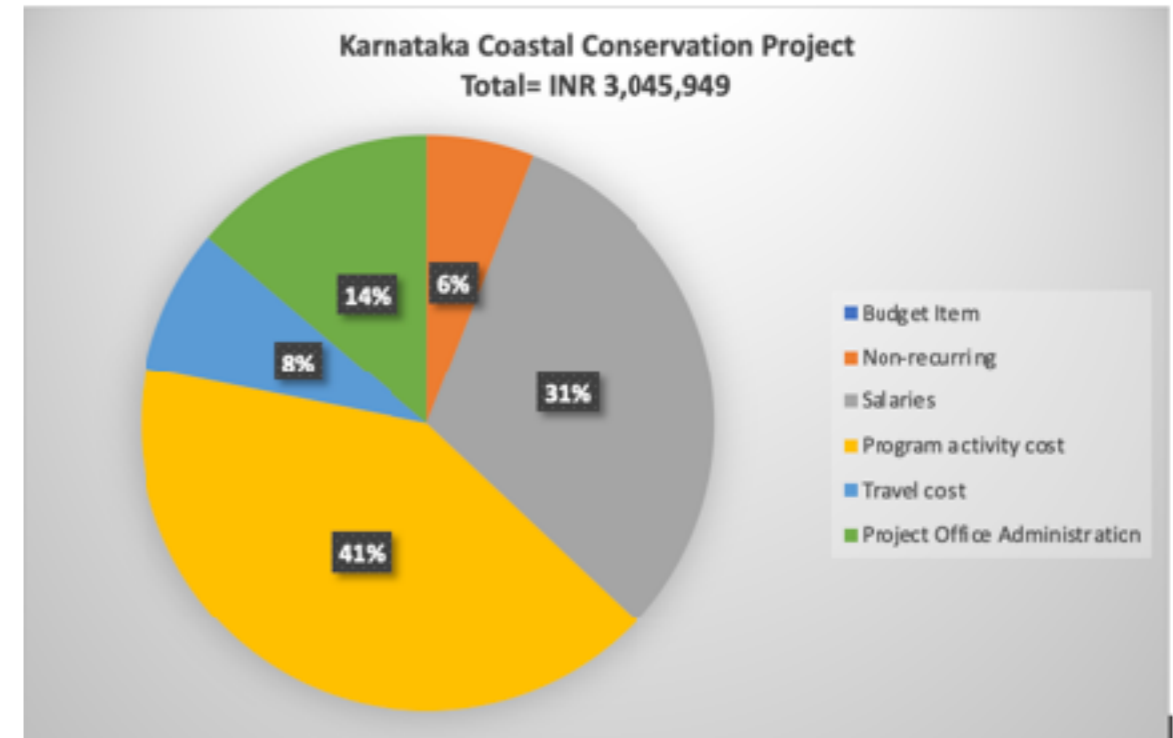
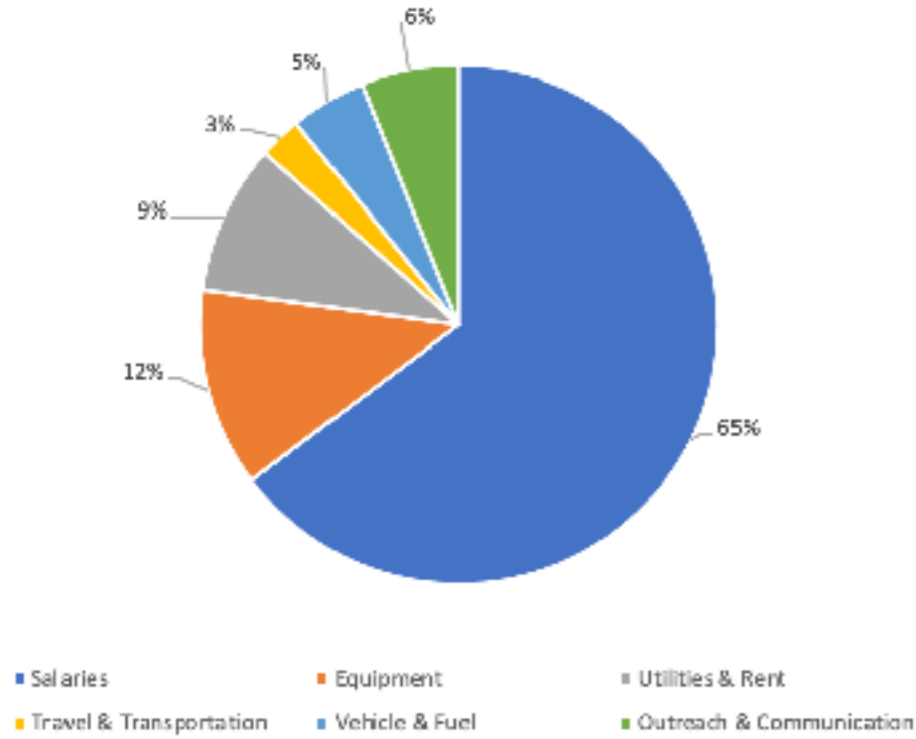


Financial Summary

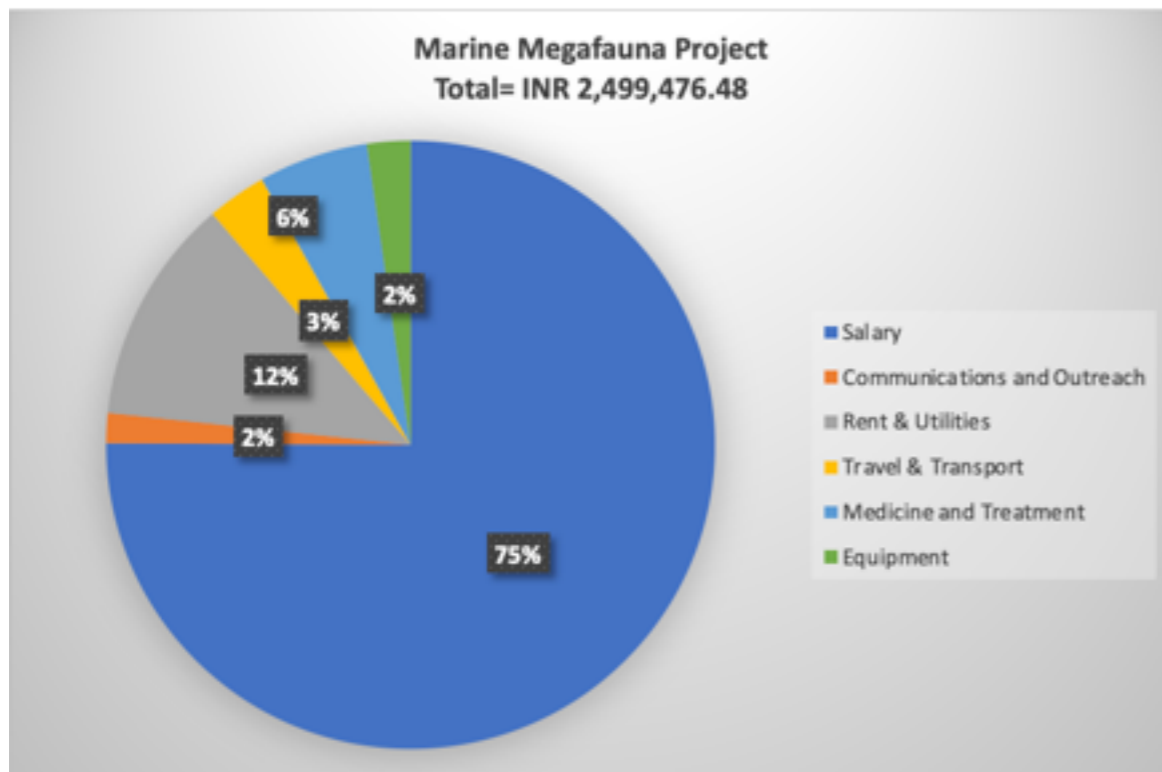


Karnataka Ghost Net Retrieval Project

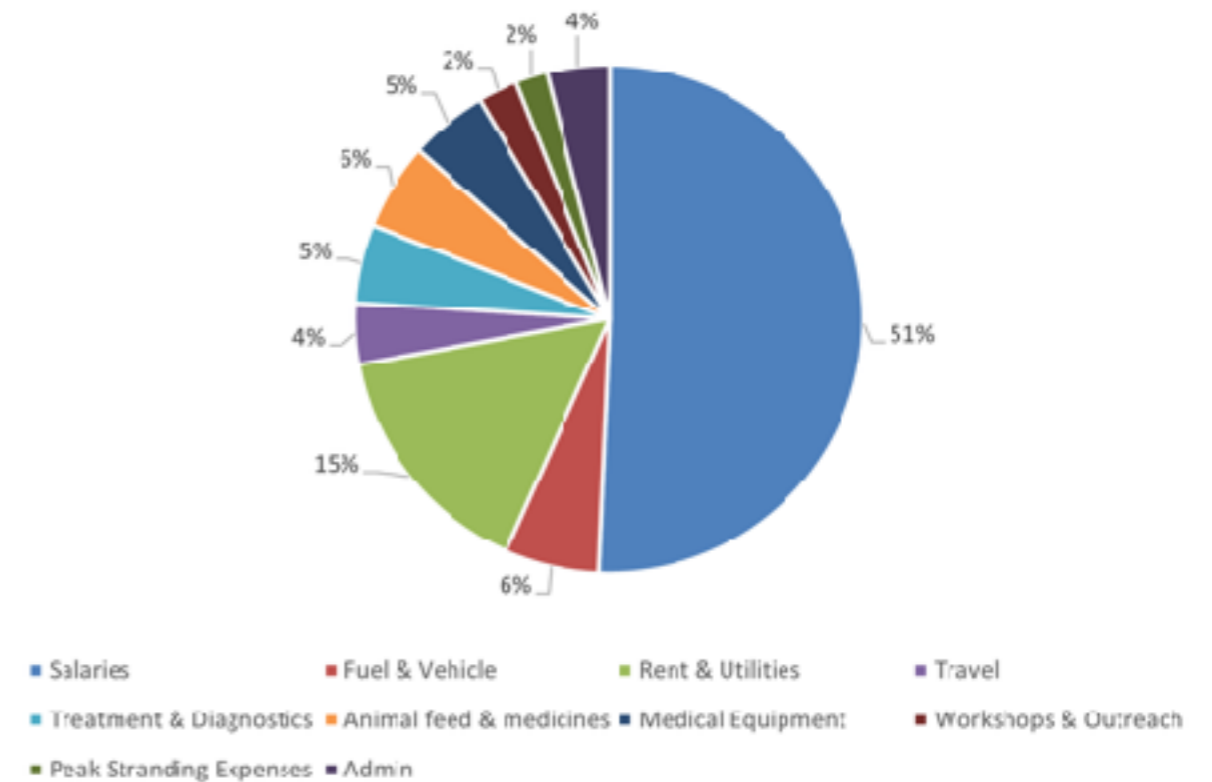
RE(EF)GENERATE TOTAL EXPENDITURE: ₹ 28,67,085.00



Karnataka Marine Megafauna Project



GOA PROJECT EXPENDITURE: ₹ 51,78,240



ReefWatch in the News

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15 Young Indians On The Frontlines Of The Fight To Save Our Oceans

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World ocean day , These Indian organizations are championing Marine conservation.

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Join These Indian Organizations At The Forefront Of Marine & Water Conservation

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Thank You!



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Bandra (W), Mumbai 400 050

It is only through the collaborative efforts of corporates, NGOs, government agencies, lawyers, artists, engineers, musicians, architects, tech teams and story tellers - that we can transition to building a world that is fiercely protective of its natural ecosystems and the health of its oceans.

Contact us if you share this vision and would like to contribute your time, expertise or money towards this shared goal.