



Charity Number 1001291

Saving land.  
Saving species.

# Together for people and nature

How World Land Trust supporters are helping  
communities protect forests in India and Madagascar



## **Celebrating impacts for biodiversity and communities, made possible by you**

It brings us great pleasure to share with you the most recent updates from the Garo Hills in India and the Ankarabolava-Agnakatrika forests in Madagascar. In 2022, we worked with our partner Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) to raise funds for its Garo Green Spine project through our annual Spring Appeal. Then, in 2023, WLT supporters helped us reach our Spring Appeal target for our new partner Missouri Botanical Garden - Madagascar Programme (MBG-Madagascar). Both these projects are aligned in their mission to weave community and ecological protection together and are already making significant positive changes across these landscapes.

Thanks to you, WTI continue to help the A'chik Mande communities in India's Garo Hills, including through biodiversity-friendly village land management plans whilst extending a vital elephant corridor. Your much-needed support means that WTI can continue to help people coinhabit these landscapes with migratory elephant herds, Critically Endangered pangolins and India's only ape species, the Western Hoolock Gibbon. Meanwhile, MBG-Madagascar has begun securing land and restoring forest in Madagascar's threatened Ankarabolava-Agnakatrika forests, guided by local communities and traditional methods of environmental resource management. As MBG-Madagascar continue to learn about the biological diversity of these forests, they have also started active reforestation in the area - offering local environmental jobs in the process. This will benefit local people whose diets, water supplies and medicinal practices are tied to these ecosystems.

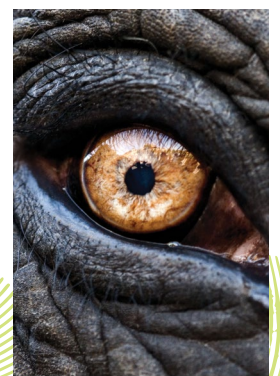
These updates demonstrate the essence of WLT's conservation mission, to value people's relationships to nature and as central to achieving conservation solutions to restore habitats, protect species and preserve our shared natural heritage. Together with our partners at the frontlines of nature conservation, we are profoundly grateful to you for taking action for nature.

## **Project Mongma Rama**

In July 2022, WLT supporters helped us reach our £350,000 fundraising target to support Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) to protect the Garo Green Spine in India's Meghalaya region. Since the Mongma Rama appeal, donations have continued to help WTI achieve a significant amount for key elephant habitats in one of the world's most threatened biodiversity hotspots. Together, we've been writing the greatest chapter yet, securing new hectares and moving closer to Project Mongma Rama's goal of establishing a 50-mile-long network of protected habitat. Here are the incredible impacts we've been making since we last updated you in 2023.

### **Protecting threatened land**

Great progress has been made with local landowners setting aside land to become Village Reserve Forests (VRFs). So far, 445 hectares (1099 acres) have been notified within the Nokrek-Emangre Elephant Corridor and 40 hectares restored by planting 46,000 trees. Much of the land protected as VRFs will protect species such as Binturong, Western Hoolock Gibbon, and Bengal Slow Loris living in the area, whilst other areas are vital for the seasonal movement of elephants. WTI will carry out a biodiversity survey to understand what other species are supported by this habitat.



## Supporting local communities

The A'chik Mande people are the beating heart of the Garo Green Spine project. As the stewards and beneficiaries of this project it is uplifting to hear of the many benefits the project has had for their communities. In October 2023, WTI organised inclusive community events to inspire collective action around biodiversity and forest protection, in conjunction with India's annual National Wildlife Week celebrations. This offered a great opportunity to spread awareness of the Garo Green Spine mission. Young people discussed ideas for taking action to conserve their surrounding forests and rich biodiversity, and news of the celebrations was published in popular print media outlets. Other positive impacts of WLT's support include:

- **Free health checks** facilitated by WTI and implemented by partners GHADC & Forest Department and the Chokpot Community Health Centre which saw over 250 people come from local and neighbouring villages.
- **Plans to renovate a dilapidated community hall** used for community gatherings and important discussions.
- **Posters** which will be put up in villages across the project region, explaining the precautions people can take when elephants are in and around their villages. **This will help mitigate possible elephant-human conflicts,**



## Safe habitat for wildlife

Your support has allowed WTI to continue to carry out monthly monitoring of the Garo Green Spine VRFs and elephant corridors. Peak elephant activity was observed during the monsoon (June to September) when fresh vegetation is available and during December 2023 when paddy fields are most productive. Alongside elephants, a total of 186 species were observed to have been utilising the corridors between October and December 2023, showing the diversity of species protected through this project. These include:

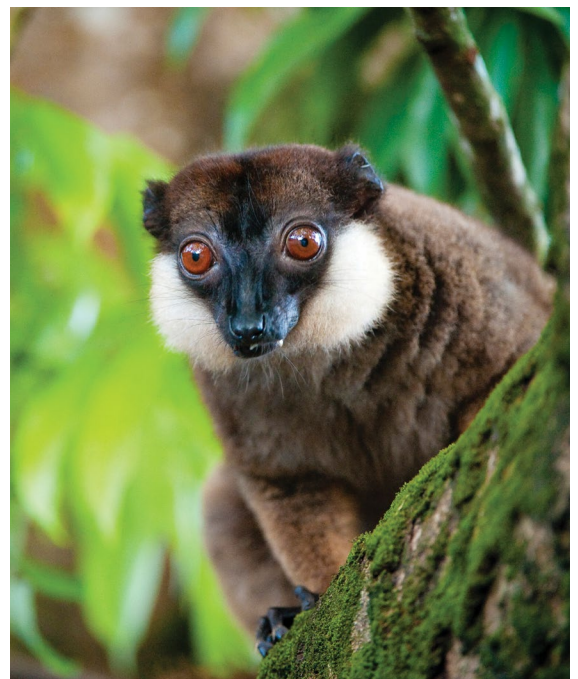
- **37 mammal species**, such as the Endangered Bengal Slow Loris, Masked Palm Civet and the Asiatic Brush-tailed Porcupine.
- **Four amphibian species**, including the Indian Bull Frog.
- **129 bird species**, including Black Eagle, White-crested Laughingthrush, and Purple-rumped Sunbird.
- **16 reptile species**, including the Bent Toed Gecko and Green Pit Viper.



Biodiversity monitoring also revealed several bat caves in the project area, inhabited by the Great Roundleaf Bat and Indian Flying Fox.

## Madagascar: A Forest for the Future

Following WLT's A Forest for the Future appeal in April 2023, our generous supporters have already started the process of repairing and expanding the Ankarabolava-Agnakatrika forests in Madagascar's Vangaindrano District. These are some of the last remaining low elevation humid forests in southeastern Madagascar. Together, we raised £586,250 for our partner Missouri Botanical Garden – Madagascar Programme (MBG-Madagascar) to begin the journey towards saving these forests from degradation, reviving their biodiversity, and reconnecting fragmented habitats. Donations to the appeal are now supporting local Antesaka communities to continue their forest-based cultural traditions sustainably for future generations. We are thrilled to share with you some updates on the direct benefits of this project.



## Protecting land

Crucially, MBG–Madagascar started the process of verifying land suitable for purchase. This involves a committee made up of Mayors, Presidents of the Fokotany and the owners and occupants of surrounding land. Attendees also include members of the 'KODINA', a committee that applies rules developed with local communities to manage natural resource use on conserved land. At the end of 2023, a total area of 38 hectares (93 acres) had already been proposed for purchase, allowing its protection and restoration. Rangers and local community members are now undertaking daily forest patrols within the Protected Area of Ankarabolava–Agnakatrika. These patrols are important for monitoring the conservation impacts on the ground. Vital equipment for the team to use in the field was purchased, including raincoats, boots, cameras, a power bank, tents, and mattresses.



## Conservation rooted in community

Protecting Ankarabolava–Agnakatrika means preserving irreplaceable cultural heritage tied to this ecosystem, as well as local livelihoods. Support for WLT helps MBG–Madagascar in its awareness–raising initiatives about the project at Ankarabolava–Agnakatrika. This has involved organising village meetings with local people and other key stakeholders to discuss short and long-term plans of the conservation project. Audio and video recordings of meetings have been broadcasted across regional television and radio to show the details and importance of protecting the forests. WLT supporters have also helped offer important environmental jobs to local people. So far, 12 village nurserymen have been employed and are already sowing seeds and potting plants to be used in the reforestation mission of the project.

## Protecting species

Funds donated by WLT supporters are enabling MBG–Madagascar to continue learning more about the remarkable, and possibly new, species at Ankarabolava–Agnakatrika. Excitingly, in October 2023 two species of Lemur were recorded for the first time at the project site. Researchers are analysing DNA samples from these individuals to see if one or both species are new to science. A local botanist also recorded the Vulnerable palm *Beccariophoenix madagascariensis* within the forests, the first scientific recording of this species here. Not only is this project offering protection for this significant palm species, but its seeds will also be collected, and attempts made to propagate it so young seedlings can be included in forest restoration efforts.



## Ecosystem restoration

The team have begun gathering seeds of native plant species from the Ankarabolava–Agnakatrika forests to be used to restore land and plant 500,000 trees between 2023 and 2028. Targeted species include *Harungana madagascariensis* and species of the Canariam family. Two bicycles and a motorbike have been bought to speed up the collection and transfer of seeds between nursery sites and to navigate muddy tracks during adverse weather. MBG–Madagascar also carried out crucial maintenance on its four existing plant



nurseries – currently home to 23,169 plants – which will be planted out when they are ready. MBG–Madagascar is also working on identifying new locations for additional nurseries to scale up their restoration efforts.

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