

News from a newly named Bangladesh Conservation NGO - WILDTEAM



The Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh, founded some years ago, has taken on a new name to reflect its "personality" and zeal. Now the name is WildTeam indicating the way the organisation works ... together, as a team. WildTeam has changed the game for nature by re-connecting people and wildlife. They aim is to bring people together to work for sustaining a "wild and wonderful" earth. WildTeam began as an NGO in Bangladesh founded in 2003. In 2012 they changed their name and registered as a charity in UK.

WTB ran an effective effort called the Sundarbans Tiger Project. Now the project is their "flagship initiative" called TigerTeam. TigerTeam works in the Bangladesh Sundarbans which is a mangrove forest where one of the largest tiger populations occur. Local people lead simple life, using forest waterway as their highways and picking up fish, wood, honey, etc. using their simple boats. They do this in an environment as dangerous as it is beautiful. Tigers roam very close to the simple huts the people live in. The TigerTeam works with both local and officials to bring about change that would help saving Sunderbans tigers and also to protect villagers. Hardly enough there is warmth and respect for tigers among the local communities, in spite of having to live with such potentially dangerous animals. The TigerTeam reinforces these positive feelings and teaches them how to save the lives of the people, their domestic animals and even tiger lives, using science to back up their strategies.

Annually, 70 domestic animals are killed and eaten by tigers; 50 villagers are attacked and die in the forest and as many as 3 tigers are killed when they come into human habitation. WildTeam has helped create 32 Village



Training "Tiger Response Teams" who patrol villages and shepherd stray tigers back into the forest, which prevents both human and tiger death



WildTeam Educates the local population on tiger conservation through the 'Social Change Campaign'



Girl Scouts students campaigning for tiger conservation

Tiger Response Teams of hundreds of volunteers in order to guard the safety of both human and animal. They scare the tigers so that they run back to the

forests and monitor large groups of people so they don't brutally kill the tigers.

WildTeam has encouraged and supported the creation of 32 Village Tiger Response Teams to keep villages safe from stray tigers and stray tigers safe from people. Started in 2008, Village Tiger Response Teams have driven many tigers back to the forest, taken steps to reduce poaching, trying to protect other wild animals and encouraging youngsters to also take interest. The TigerTeam is working well as more villages are asking for response teams. Soon there will be 50 teams. When the tigers have come inside the village it is not possible for the villagers to scare them back to their own ambit, so the Tiger Response Team handles the crowds while the Forest Department tranquilizes the tiger and shifts it back home.

WildTeam is registered in Bangladesh (NFP C-51230) and in UK (Charity no. 1149465). Contact them at <http://www.wild-team.org/contact-us> to find out more about them and join their activities.

Dr. Gawsia Wahidunnessa Chowdhury, a member of WildTeam has been chosen as a lecturer in the Department of Zoology at Dhaka University. Gawsia earned a PhD at Cambridge University in UK last year. For her PhD project she developed a biotic index which provides a useful tool for the standardised monitoring of lakes in Bangladesh. The findings included a classification of different lake systems and investigates how freshwater mussel abundance predicts the biodiversity in some study sites.



Gawsia Wahidunnessa Chowdhury monitoring freshwater species

Now Gawsia can continue to be very much involved with WildTeam which she has served faithfully since 2003 when it was WTB.

Another member of WildTeam has earned an international conservation award. University of Kent PhD student Samia Saif has won the [Future of Nature Award 2013](#) for her groundbreaking research on the protection of tigers in Bangladesh. Samia's research has revealed, for the first time, the scale of tiger poaching in Bangladesh's Sundarbans mangrove forest region, the only area in the country where they are found. The research also identified poaching as the most significant threat to Bangladesh's last tiger population.



Winner of Future of Nature Award 2013

By working closely with local communities to improve conservation in the region, Samia's research involved starting a community information network and policing system to reduce tiger poaching activities. She gained the trust and respect of villagers from communities which border the Sundarbans and was able to garner valuable information about tiger poaching.



WildTeam launching ceremony. Photo Courtesy: The Daily Star.

Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh officially became WildTeam at a ceremony at the capital to mark the launching of the new name. It was a high profile launching with high level government and political officers. Starting from the left side of the photo Grace Mozena, Wife of US Ambassador in Khala; Md. Yunus Ali, Chief Conservator of Forest, Dr. Hasan Mahmud, Minister of Environment and Forests; Prof. Anwarul Islam, Chief Executive of Wild Team; Dan Mozena, Ambassador of US; Enayetullah Khan, Chairman of WildTeam; Svend Olling, Ambassador of Royal Danish Embassy, and his son Mark.