

Building Collaborative Approaches to Combat Wildlife Crime

The second Indian Wildlife Ecology Conference (IWECE 2026) was held from 10–12 July 2026 at Ashoka University, Sonapat, Haryana, jointly organised by Ashoka University and co-organised by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI). The conference brought together researchers, conservation practitioners, policymakers and organisations working across India's wildlife and conservation landscape, providing a platform to share research, field experiences and practical approaches to emerging conservation challenges.

As part of IWECE, WTI and Aaranyak's Legal and Advocacy Division convened a Special Interest Group on **“Establishing a Community of Practice to Address Illegal Wildlife Hunting and Trade through Integrated Community Surveillance and Evidence-Based Protection.”** The sessions brought together practical experiences on using open-source information for wildlife crime monitoring, identifying urban trafficking pathways through pet-shop surveys, strengthening community-led surveillance through Community Surveillance and Monitoring Teams, and applying data-driven tools to wildlife protection.

The discussions highlighted an important principle: effective wildlife crime prevention requires communities, conservation organisations, technology and enforcement agencies to work together. By sharing field-tested approaches and exploring how community-generated information, digital sources and systematic monitoring can support early identification of threats, the SIG helped strengthen a wider community of practice for evidence-based wildlife crime prevention. The exchange also opened opportunities to adapt successful approaches across different landscapes and strengthen collaboration with enforcement agencies.