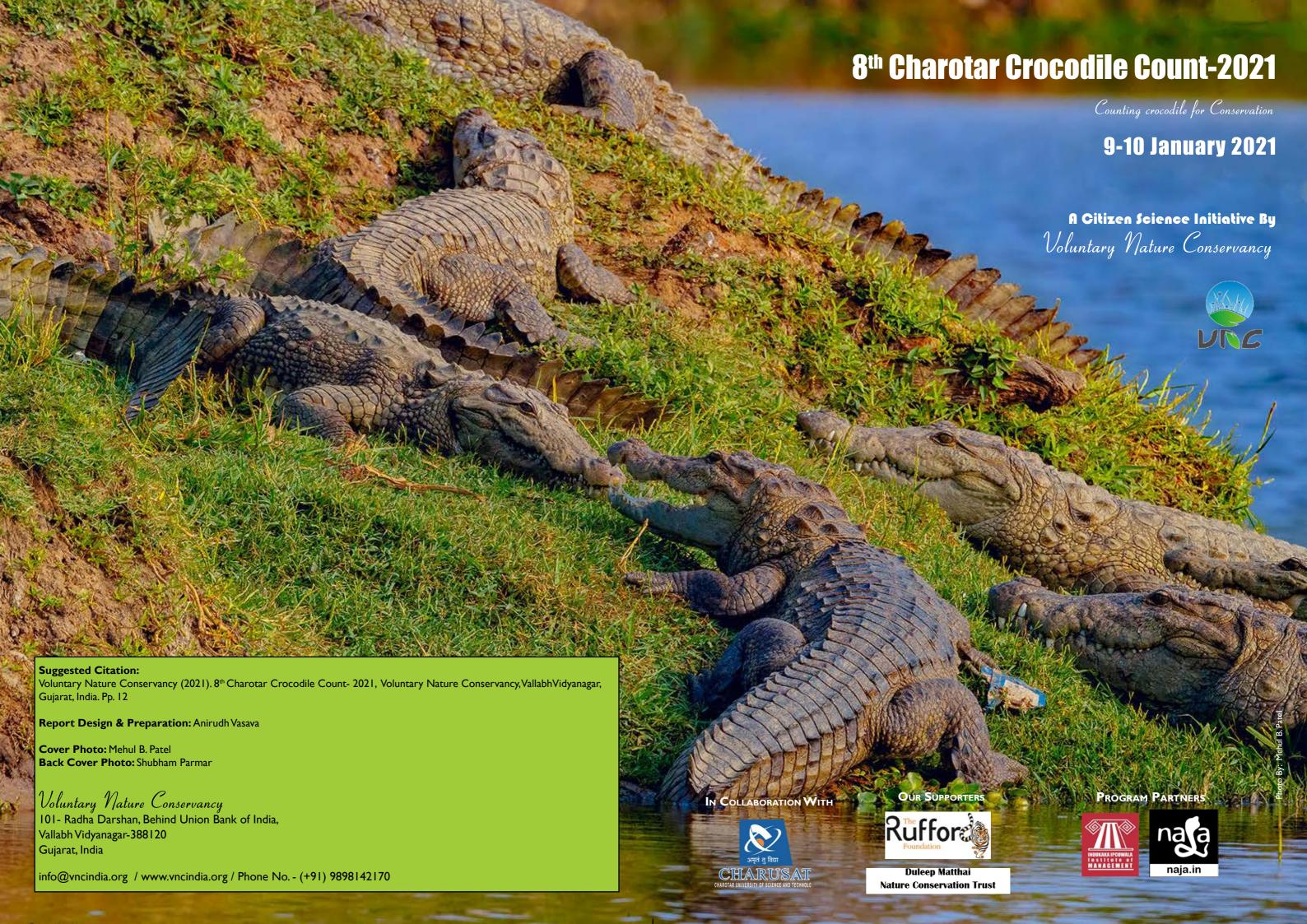


8TH Charotar Crocodile Count

2021





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It brings us great joy in bringing this report of the recently concluded 8th Charotar Crocodile Count-2021. The event was a great success. However, this time it was different than earlier ones. Because of the Covid-19 Pandemic, we did not invite any participants outside the organisation, and local volunteers were indulged to count the crocodiles. We hope, once the things become normal, we again will have a gathering of individuals from across the country, interested in crocodile research and conservation here in Charotar.

A major thanks you to Dr. Devang Joshi, Registrar (CHARUSAT) and Dr. Bhaskar Pandya, Principal, Indukaka Ipcowala Institute of Management (CHARUSAT) who have been supporting the event since its inception. We hearty thank them for their valuable support and inspiration.

This program wouldn't have been possible without the efforts of VNC's volunteers who helped manage the count and coordinated the team in the field. We thank all the volunteers for their liberal help. You guys did an excellent job. Congratulation. (See page 21-22 for the group photo and list of the volunteers).

We additionally thank numerous organisations who have been supporting our aim of conserving crocodiles in Charotar. NAJA India (www.naja.in), has been our associate on numerous ventures, and an ardent supporter in different activities. The Rufford Small Grant Foundation and the Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust supported our initial work on conservation of muggers in Charotar. Further supported was provided by Idea Wild. We are thankful to aforementioned organisation for supporting us.

At last yet most importantly, we thank the residents of Charotar region who have acknowledged this species as co-occupant, and are focused on supporting mugger conservation in this area



What is Charotar Crocodile Count?

Charotar Crocodile Count, born in 2013, is an annual event, designed to bring together a diverse set of participants to understand the importance of muggers and wetland in the present day conservation scenario. This voluntary based initiative while helping us to gain a better understanding of crocodile's status and distribution across the Charotar region and providing participants an opportunity to meet people who live alongside crocodiles, aims at inculcating a holistic understanding of the subject amongst the participants, who can then become the ambassador of conservation in their respective regions. This program is first of its kind in Gujarat and has generated a very useful population data over the years (2013-2020), which is being used by wildlife managers, researchers and conservation or-

IMPORTANCE OF CHAROTAR REGION

Charotar region is significant for sustenance of mugger population of Charotar and for meta-population of Central Gujarat. The region is also an important dispersal and breeding ground for muggers between the meta-populations in Central Gujarat. The region not only hosts an important population of muggers but also multitude of fascinating rich faunal diversity, especially birds. Notable is the largest population of Sarus cranes in the state that survives in Charotar, and other parts of Anand-Kheda districts. However, the reason this population is important is that this population does not survive in any forested or protected area but in village pond and canals amongst the humans.

muggers amongst the people of Charotar.

CROCODILE POPULATION ASSESMENT

Citizen Science is an exciting, multifaceted way to bring people from all walks of life together for research and conservation.

For crocodile counts, a team of 5-12 volunteer, depending on the size of the water body to be surveyed, was allocated to various villages. The crocodile surveys were carried out using the "Day/Basking Survey", wherein the participants scanned the wetland from a suitable vantage point for the presence of crocodiles on the edge of water, basking areas and in water, and collected information on the number of individual, size, location and activity (if any). The surveys began after 9:30 AM and continued till 2:00 PM.

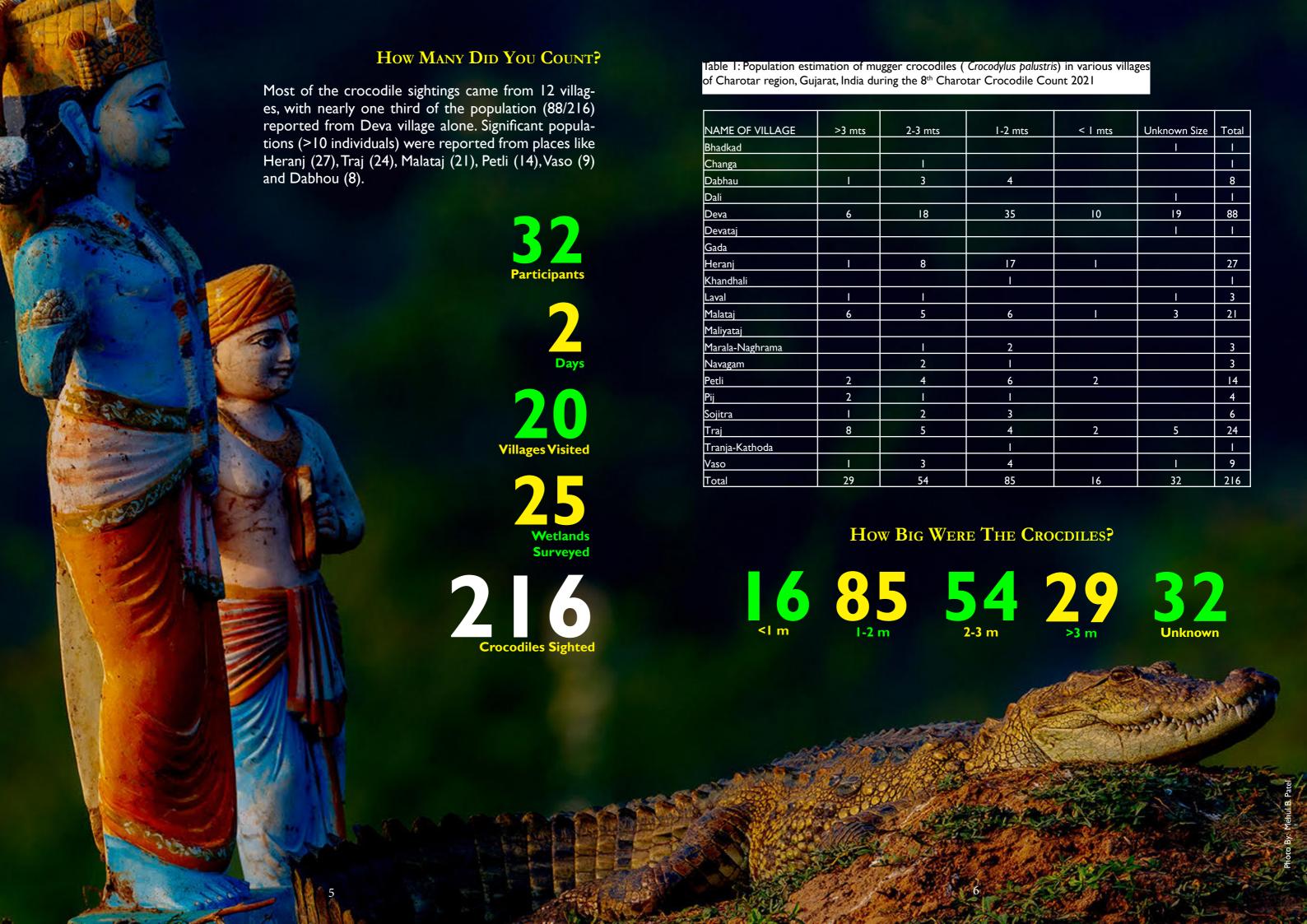
How does this croc count helps?

The count provides an ideal opportunity to understand the significance of biodiversity and how villagers harmoniously coexist with muggers.

-lt also helps participants understand the intimate relationship local communities share with ecosystem and understand how muggers indirectly manage ecosystem by functioning as keystone species.

-All relevant information on population observed during the count will shared with concerned authorities for the management purposes.

wildlife managers, researchers and conservation organisations alike. And the most intriguing aspect of these population is that the muggers and the villagers survive along each other without much conflicts, setting a fine example of what we know as" co-existence". Mahi Irrigation Project irrigates large areas in this region, and therefore an intensive irrigation canal network interlinks most of the water bodies. This extensive network of canal acts as travelling routes for the dispersing crocodiles, and thus favours genetic exchange. These wetlands serve as a lifeline for agriculture in and around the landscape. Our earlier surveys have found that there exists a high tolerance of





A GLIMPSE.... 8TH CHAROTAR CROCODILE COUNT 2021





























ground Photo By: Cassidix Media Works

VNC's TEAM



Standing (From Left to Right): Malkesh Soni, Gunjan Buch, Mehul B Patel, Anirudh Vasava, Ankur Makwana, Vicky Bhatia, Megha Patel, Jignesh Patel, Karan Patel, Pruthviraj Patel, Vandan Parekh, Ishani Dave, Mukesh Dave, Diti Dave, Tejas Patel, Bhaumikchandra Rajdeep, Vishal Mistry, Jaimin Makwana, Sathya Narayanan, Girish Patel, Bhargesh Shah Neel Talati, Jilesh Patel, Nikhil Parekh, Zarana Desai, Mow Choudhary, Niyati Patel

Sitting (From left to right): Shubham Parmar, Mehul Patel

Photo By: Shubham Parma

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Voluntary Nature Conservancy

Vidyanagar Nature Club/Voluntary Nature Conservancy (VNC) is registered as Public Charitable Trust Vides No: E/2659/Anand under Bombay Public Trusts Act 1950 in the year 2003 with the main mission of creating environmentally sensitive society. Located in Vallabh Vidyanagar town of Gujarat, VNC has been working actively since its inception with its primary objectives to inculcate love for the environment, and appreciate sustainable living. Started with the idea of sharing the simple joys of bird watching, cycling in the midst of nature, and enjoying being in nature's lap, VNC has grown into an organisation whose working areas now broadly include (1) Environment Education, (2) Research & Conservation, and (3) Awareness & Advocacy. VNC tries to fill up the prevailing gap that exist in the society and education system for environment education and learning, and conducts extensive educational programs in schools and colleges. VNC's wildlife related projects include India wolf monitoring in Kutch, mugger crocodile conservation in Gujarat, understanding and mitigating crop depredation in Little Rann of Kutch, forest owlet monitoring in south Gujarat, assessing and mitigating snakebite in Gujarat, capacity building to assist wildlife conservation and citizen science initiative to promote crocodile conservation. VNC carries out various campaigns such as the Snakebite Mitigation Program, Save the Sparrow project, Greenathon (annual marathon), Save the Vulture program, and drives to reduce pollution. Besides this, we also deal with ongoing environmental issues that occur around us, such as illegal cutting of trees, water pollution, and waste management. VNC is accredited by GEF, (Global Environment Facility) and is a member of GEA (Global Environmental Action) & SAYEN (South Asia Youth & Environment Network). VNC is also registered Non Profit foundation as Voluntary Nature Conservancy in USA.

Addres

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