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43/2 Varadarajulu Nagar, 5th Street West, Ganapathy, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu 641006, India
Registered Office: 3A2 Varadarajulu Nagar, FCI Road, Ganapathy, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu 641006, India
Ph: +91 9385339863 | www.threatenedtaxa.org
Email: sanjay@threatenedtaxa.org

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Dr. Sanjay Molur

Wildlife Information Liaison Development (WILD) Society & Zoo Outreach Organization (ZOO),
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continued on the back inside cover

Cover: The breathtakingly beautiful Silver Jubilee cover of JoTT is done in color pencils and ink by the 13-year old darling, Elakshi Mahika Molur.



Celebrating 25 years of building evidence for conservation

For a quarter of a century, the *Journal of Threatened Taxa* has been serving a critical role in conservation. Every month, without fail, the pages of this open access online publication fill up steadily with words that describe the wonders of the natural world — as observations, scientific experiments, or opinions — serving over 120,000 readers across the world.

A product made in India without the hype or hoopla, serving scientists, organizations, conservationists, wildlifers, educators, veterinarians, pathologists, environmentalists, communities, independent researchers, and institutions among others. *JoTT* — as it is popularly known — has grown from a 12-page peer-reviewed section of *Zoos' Print* in April 1999 to this issue of March 2024 with 200 pages. A journey, as the founder, I never thought of in my wildest imagination to achieve this.

I would like to imagine, given its popularity, *JoTT* is a cornerstone for conservationists, scientists, and enthusiasts worldwide; and I have been told repeatedly that it is a beacon of excellence serving the community at large.

The legendary Sally Walker and I realized the need for a peer-reviewed journal in the late 1990s during our various Conservation Assessment and Management Plan (CAMP) workshops to assess the Red List status of species from various groups (Mammals, Plants, Reptiles, Amphibians, Invertebrates, Fish) across India. A common thread of complaint from all scientists and biologists in the various workshops was the lack of a timely and affordable peer-reviewed journal that would help publish articles relevant for conservation quickly and be freely available. The costs of purchasing articles in those days were prohibitive for most Indians as well as other southern Asians, and we had heard the same to be true of other biodiversity-rich countries around the world that were poor. So, the seed of our next adventure was sown in those different workshops in 1997–98. As the number of technical articles submitted to *Zoos' Print* increased, we decided to submit some of those to experts to review. The encouragement from the scientific world spurred us to start a peer-reviewed section called *Zoos' Print Journal*. And, we have come a long way since.

Zoos' Print Journal lasted until December of 2007 when we decided that it had reached a stage where a standalone journal with a name more inclusive than what was at that point in time would have a better impact. Based on the experience of *ZPJ*, we renamed it as the *Journal of Threatened Taxa* in January 2009. *Zoo's Print* continues to be published as a disseminator of information for conservation science on the 21st of every month while *JoTT* is published on the 26th of every month.

With the combination of *ZPJ* and *JoTT*, this 25th-anniversary edition is the 318th issue (Totally, there have been 105 issues of *ZPJ*, 183 regular issues of *JoTT*, and 30 Monographs in *JoTT*). Other milestones include almost 28,000 pages combined and this issue crossing the 25,000 pages in the new avatar (25,018 pages); the total number of articles published is 3,873 (965 in *ZPJ* and 2,908 in *JoTT*).

Many people have contributed significantly to the evolution of *JoTT*, starting from Binu Priya who helped manage *ZPJ* initially for a couple of years, followed by B. Ravichandran who took over as the managing editor of *JoTT*. Ravi's contribution has been invaluable. The periodicity, solidity, and frequency of *JoTT* are purely due to his dedication, patience, and perseverance. Another person who has shaped *JoTT* is Latha Ravikumar, whose dogged application, determination, tireless contribution to building, maintaining, updating, backing-up, archiving, and constantly fixing the website has ensured its near smooth performance. Without these two people, I would have been hard-pressed to keep *JoTT* going. Other people in the office who have helped out include Priyanka Iyer, and more recently Usha Ravindra and Trisa Bhattacharjee for the copious amounts of copyediting they volunteer. Thanks are also due to the remote staff, Melito Pinto and Paloma Naronha, for helping with copyediting. A special shout-out to our enthusiastic volunteers, Fred Pluthero, Mira Bhojwani, and P. Ilango who have given many an article better shape in their presentation style and language.

I am indebted to more than 150 subject/section editors for their constant support and tireless efforts, but would like to mention a few names who have stood by and delivered consistently — Drs. Mewa Singh, Priya

Davidar, L.A.K. Singh, Mandar Paingankar, Hemant Ghate, Pankaj Kumar, Solomon Raju, John Caleb, Angie Appel, H.N. Kumara, & S.R. Ganesh among others; Raju Vyas & H. Byju; and several others whom I apologize for not mentioning by name due to space. I wish to thank each and every one of the thousands of reviewers, who have shaped the publications. I am indebted to two friends who have stood by us with monetary support—Drs. Neelesh Dahanukar and Mandar Paingankar—without whose help digitizing and archiving would have been very difficult.

I was unhappy (and still am) to introduce the article processing contribution in 2021 when COVID 19 almost closed *JoTT*. It helped us stay afloat mainly thanks to the staff of WILD and Zooreach who volunteered their time uncomplainingly and still do. I am indebted to the authors who range from novices to top scientists from more than 80 countries who continue to publish in *JoTT* despite the modest APC. They shattered my perception of losing out on authors and submissions when *JoTT*

model changed from platinum open access to gold open access. And, I'm thankful to all the readers who use and distribute the publications all over the world making *JoTT* a success.

Ending this celebratory editorial, I wish to thank my office colleagues, who have stood by Sally and me all these years and have braved all the challenges of working in this field. But for them, this journey of *JoTT* would not have been possible. And, of course, the support I get from home from my wife Payal and from our daughter Elakshi Mahika who are rock solid pillars of support and to whom I'm forever indebted. The absolutely amazing cover of this celebratory issue is made by Elakshi. Her varied artistic abilities are a delight to discover every day. I discussed the cover and gave her a free hand at applying herself and she did it with doing her own research, developed the context, and visualized the theme. I had nothing to add to the 13-years old's interpretation of what *JoTT* does and its philosophy. I'm sure she'll make Stephen Nash, the creator and illustrator of the *JoTT* logo, proud.

Sanjay Molur

Founder & Chief Editor, JoTT

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43/2 Varadarajulu Nagar, 5th Street West, Ganapathy, Coimbatore,
Tamil Nadu 641006, India
ravi@threatenedtaxa.org

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