

Invasive species - synthesising knowledge across

Day 2 | 11 July 2026, 4:30-6:00 PM

The Special Interest Group convened with the aim of understanding the current methods used to document invasive species. The SIG was attended by 22 people from across India (spanning Kashmir, central India, Western Ghats, and southern India). Four speakers – Abhirami C. (NCF), Achyut Banerjee (APU Bhopal), Kabir Sharma (Desta), and Harshavardhini Angappan (Keystone Foundation), gave 5 minute overviews of the diverse approaches they use to study and document invasive plants. Abhirami gave an overview of experimental and field-based studies; Kabir demonstrated the Banni App that provides predictions of invasive biomass load and livelihood interactions under changing climate; Achyut spoke about the invasive plant database ILORA, and Harshavardhini spoke about community contributed data and citizen science in documenting spread of invasive plants at local and regional scales.

Recognising the diverse approaches being used for documenting invasive species, this overview paved the way for a group discussion. The audience was divided into two groups, who brainstormed the following questions –

1. What kinds of invasive species monitoring resources/tools should be available publicly?
2. Who would use these tools? Where would they access these tools?

In response, the groups recognised that monitoring invasive species at scale requires resources such as remotely sensed data, large databases like ILORA, tech that integrates local understanding of people-species-climate as a system (such as the Banni App), other sources of distribution information. Additionally, a long list of stakeholders spanning not just forest managers and scientists/researchers/students, but also landscapers, farmers, gram sabhas and panchayats, pet keepers/traders, nursery owners etc. was created. To make sure that the correct resources and tools reached the correct stakeholder, collaborations with existing collectives (like the Ecological Restoration Alliance, and The Lantana Collective) were deemed as important. The session concluded with the announcement of a potential collective/society that would spearhead the collation of these resources for the diverse stakeholders.