

WORLD WETLANDS DAY

Reviving Wisdom, Restoring Wetlands



On 2 February 2026, the Progyan Foundation for Research and Innovation (PFRI), in collaboration with the South Asian Forum for Environment (SAFE), observed **World Wetlands Day** across some of India's most ecologically significant wetland landscapes. Aligned with the global theme, '**Wetlands and Traditional Knowledge: Celebrating Cultural Heritage**,' the day reaffirmed our collective commitment to integrating science with indigenous wisdom to secure resilient wetland futures.

At Kanwar Taal, a one-day review workshop titled '**Agroforestry in Wetlands: Myth or Mission?**' was organised in collaboration with Indian Institute of Technology Madras. The dialogue brought together scientists, policymakers, and local farmers to critically examine the transformative potential of agroforestry in flood-prone ecosystems. Discussions centered on blending indigenous regenerative agricultural practices with contemporary ecological science to create climate-resilient, carbon-positive wetland systems that enhance both livelihoods and biodiversity.

In the **East Kolkata Wetlands**, a joint assessment by PFRI and SAFE highlighted a concerning paradox. Despite the East Kolkata Wetlands' continued success as the world's largest wastewater-fed aquaculture system, a '*silent extinction*' is underway. Indigenous fish species such as *Puntius ticto* are gradually disappearing, increasingly replaced by invasive varieties like *Oreochromis niloticus*. Coupled with measurable wetland shrinkage, this trend signals the urgent need for restorative interventions rooted in both ecological science and community stewardship.



Meanwhile, at **Deepor Beel**, sustained community-led conservation efforts remain focused on protecting native fish diversity, promoting bio-rights-based livelihoods, strengthening flood resilience, and engaging youth in wetland guardianship.

In the **Indian Sundarban**, PFRI and SAFE continue advancing mangrove restoration, conservation of salt-tolerant rice genotypes, sustainable aquafarming, regenerative agriculture, and alternative wetland-friendly livelihoods. Across all sites, one message resonated clearly: wetlands are not merely ecological assets but living cultural landscapes. By honoring traditional knowledge systems alongside scientific innovation, we move closer to securing biodiversity, food security, and climate resilience for generations to come.

PROGYAN DAY

Four Years of Purpose and Possibility

On **9 February 2026**, the *Progyan Foundation for Research and Innovation (PFRI)* marked **four years** of purposeful engagement with nature and communities. Progyan Day was not merely an anniversary; it was a moment of reflection on a journey shaped by inquiry, resilience, and a shared conviction to build climate-secure and community-centered futures.

From its humble beginnings as an idea rooted in ecological research and social responsibility, PFRI has grown into a dynamic platform working across wetlands, mangrove ecosystems, agroforestry landscapes, and climate-vulnerable regions. Over the past four years, the Foundation has championed science-based interventions strengthened by indigenous knowledge systems, demonstrating that sustainable development must emerge from dialogue between research and community wisdom. This year's celebration carried a special significance with the proud publication of the storybook ***Sundarider Bon***. Created for the young dreamers of the Sundarban, the book is a lyrical tribute to the forest, its people, and its timeless wisdom. Through storytelling, it seeks to nurture ecological sensitivity among children while honoring the cultural and environmental heritage of the region.



Progyan Day served as an opportunity to acknowledge the unwavering commitment of researchers, field teams, partner institutions, community leaders, and youth who have shaped this journey. It also reaffirmed our pledge to continue working in harmony with ecosystems, strengthening mangrove restoration efforts, promoting climate-resilient agriculture, safeguarding wetland biodiversity, and fostering sustainable livelihoods.

As we step into our fifth year, we do so with renewed purpose. The story of PFRI is still unfolding guided by research, rooted in communities, and inspired by nature's enduring wisdom. Progyan Day 2026 stands as a reminder that meaningful change grows steadily, nurtured by collaboration, knowledge, and hope for a more resilient tomorrow.

FEBRUARY 2026 FIELD VISIT:

Strategic Institutional Engagement in Arunachal Pradesh

From **20–25 February 2026**, **PFRI–SAFE** conducted a strategic field mission to *Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh* under the **APN CAPABLE** and Rainforest Trust initiatives to advance institutional partnerships, stakeholder convergence, and secondary data acquisition for biodiversity and climate-resilience programming.

A key outcome was the signing of a non-financial MoU with ICAR- Rain Forest Research Institute (RFRI), Jorhat, formalizing collaboration in joint project bidding, carbon financing research, and coordinated knowledge exchange through designated SPOCs.

Extensive consultations were held with the Directorate of Fisheries, Fire & Emergency Services, State Forest Research Institute & Biodiversity Board, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department, Disaster Management Department, and other state agencies. Discussions focused on natural resource mapping, species-specific assessments, wildfire and disaster data systems, biodiversity documentation, habitat restoration, Loss and Damage frameworks, and convergence opportunities for climate adaptation.

Academic partnerships were strengthened with Rajiv Gandhi University and North Eastern Regional Institute of Science and Technology (NERIST), identifying avenues for consortium-based research, joint publications, student internships, capacity-building in biodiversity research methodologies, and postgraduate dissertation supervision.

Engagements with National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and the State Rural Livelihood Mission identified pilot demonstration opportunities in Lower Dibang Valley and West Kameng, focusing on solid waste management, drinking water systems, climate-resilient agriculture, and sustainable livelihoods, supported by concept notes structured around Theory of Change frameworks.

The visit concluded with defined action points, proposal submissions, data-sharing commitments, and institutional focal points, establishing a structured roadmap for collaborative, science-based interventions in Arunachal Pradesh.