

MADHU RAO

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Profile

Conservation practitioner with over 20 years of experience in enabling impact through science-based, policy-oriented, practical conservation solutions. Global and regional (Asia) experience in conservation science and policy, resource mobilization, programme strategy development and implementation. Expertise in developing and operationalizing multi-stakeholder conservation alliances, capacity development initiatives working with government agencies, civil society organizations, academic institutions in addition to leveraging financial investments for conservation.

Experience

CHAIR, IUCN WCPA | MEMBER, IUCN COUNCIL | MEMBER, PROGRAMME & POLICY COMMITTEE, IUCN COUNCIL | SEPTEMBER 2021 – PRESENT

- Leading a global volunteer network of protected area experts, implementing a mandate approved by the IUCN members, delivering on the WCPA mission to develop and provide scientific, technical and policy advice and advocate for global and national systems of marine, freshwater and terrestrial protected and conserved areas that result in successful outcomes for the conservation of biodiversity.
- Positioning area-based conservation (protected and conserved areas) at the forefront of the biodiversity, climate and health policy agendas at a global scale.
- Governance oversight and strategic direction of IUCN.

INTERIM REGIONAL DIRECTOR | WCS SOUTH ASIA | JUNE 2024 – PRESENT

- Programmatic, financial and management oversight of WCS Country Programmes in Bangladesh and India.
- Responsible for resource mobilization and programme delivery, strengthening country-level financial and administrative operations and policies.
- Ensuring strategic and programmatic alignment with WCS Global priorities with a focus on conservation impact.

SENIOR ADVISOR | WCS ASIA | 2016-2024

- Delivered on programmatic evaluations for WCS Country Programmes in Bangladesh and China.
- Supported capacity development for protected area management in Myanmar and Lao PDR.
- Guided conservation strategy development (country-level) and conservation priority setting (regional-level)
- Technical oversight for regional land- and seascape scale conservation initiatives and wildlife trafficking policy (Malaysia, Indonesia, China, Myanmar)
- Administrative and financial management, programme development and strategy implementation; alignment and integration of WCS regional and international policy priorities (China, Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia)
- Policy advocacy and thought leadership at key national and regional policy platforms.

ADJUNCT ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR | NATIONAL UNIV. SINGAPORE | 2006-2024

- Led the design and development of a Professional Master's Programme in Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainability aimed at building regional and local conservation leadership
- Publications focused on threatened species, protected areas, wildlife trafficking and drivers of deforestation in Southeast Asia.

STRATEGY ADVISOR | ASIAN SPECIES ACTION PARTNERSHIP | 2013-2024

- Strategy development and programme implementation; helping position the multi-agency initiative as a catalyst for conservation action on Critically Endangered species across the ASEAN region in collaboration with Wildlife Reserves Singapore (currently Mandai Nature).

PROJECT COORDINATOR | NETWORK OF CONSERVATION EDUCATORS AND PRACTITIONERS | AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY 2003-2009

- Responsible for the design and implementation of capacity development initiatives (in biodiversity conservation and protected area management) with the American Museum of Natural History, engaging with relevant academic and professional training institutions in Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam, Mongolia and China.

VISITING FELLOW | DEPT. OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY | 2001-2003

- Publications on wildlife exploitation, food security, livelihoods and conservation

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR | WCS, ASIA PROGRAM, NEW YORK | 1998-2001

- Responsible for the oversight of field programs across 12 countries in Asia; Developed and assisted in the implementation of site-based conservation projects in the Asia region working in partnership with national government agencies and international institutions and donors. Managed the Asia Program budget and provided oversight and support to all country programs and staff in the Asia region.

Education

Doctor of Philosophy in Conservation Biology | 1998 | DUKE UNIVERSITY, USA

Master of Science in Conservation Biology | 1995 | DUKE UNIVERSITY, USA

Master of Science (Hons.) in Biological Science | 1991 | BIRLA INST. OF TECH. & SCIENCE, INDIA

Skills & Abilities

Strategic planning
Project management
Resource mobilization

Capacity development
Conflict resolution
Leadership

Diplomacy
Public speaking
Team building

Competences

- Commitment to enabling conservation impact at scale, with wide-ranging experience from local, field level implementation to regional and global policy development
- Diplomacy, decision-making and management skills with ability to effectively delegate, empower and motivate teams
- An effective leader, able to bring together individuals and organizations as a connector and a facilitator keeping groups focused on outcomes
- Ability to work across disciplinary and core expertise boundaries to engage and influence policies and actions by functionally diverse organizations.

Publications

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Madhu-Rao-8> | <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5360-4073>

<https://iucn.org/our-union/commissions/iucn-world-commission-protected-areas-2021-2025>