

SpiderIndia is a citizen science initiative which aims to learn and share knowledge about the spider diversity and its natural history across the Indian subcontinent. The SpiderIndia community started with Yahoo groups and has now culminated into a Facebook group of more than 8,000 members with a huge diversity of professional backgrounds. SpiderIndia also organizes annual meetings to avail personal interactions, give talks, discuss observations, plan field trips, and design future collaborative studies through participation of citizen scientists.

In 2021, the fifth SpiderIndia annual meeting was held between 17-19 December at Auroville, Tamil Nadu. The number of participants is generally restricted to 30, however, to prevent the spread of ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we had to further constrain this number to 15. We received about 24 applications, however, several changes of plans/cancellations occurred due to the uncertainty imposed by the pandemic. Finally, 15 people made it, arriving from Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Karnataka and Gujarat and Sikkim states of India.

The first day began with an introduction to SpiderIndia and a general plan for the meeting by SpiderIndia coordinator Siddharth Kulkarni. Edward Chinniah from the media production team of Pichandikulam forest introduced the region and its history. All participants divided into two groups, conducted field trip to observe, photograph and take notes on spiders from the region.

Invited talks were given by Divya Uma, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, Thomas Vattakaven, Strand Life Sciences, Bengaluru and Vijay Barve, University of Florida, Gainesville. Divya spoke about “Ecology and behaviour of Spiders with special mention of *Stegodyphus sarasinorum*” with an introduction to spiders.

On the second day, participants commuted to Aranya forest which is managed by Saravanan D. He gave a talk about the history of the forests and awareness and outreach activities conducted by his organization. Vijay Barve gave a talk about Documenting Spider Diversity, importance of citizen science, an overview of GBIF and its role in aggregating biodiversity data. His talk was followed by Thomas Vattakaven discussing the project funded by GBIF BIFA, importance of biodiversity data archival and mobilization and use of India Biodiversity Portal. All participants conducted field trip after lunch.

The third day of the meeting was organized at the Auroville Botanical Garden where Sathyamurthy, a resident botanist gave a talk about their garden and conducted a field trip to demonstrate their ongoing projects and the diversity of plants. Siddharth Kulkarni gave a talk on the evolution of the world's smallest orb weaving spiders. After the lunch, participants dispersed to observe spiders in the garden. The next morning participants dispersed after this intensive exploration of spiders.

A total of about 60 species of spiders were observed during the three-day meeting. Several participants decided to make a group of social media and continue to discuss and observe spiders. This meeting was hosted by SpiderIndia member Anubhav Agarwal, organized by NatureMates Organization and managed by Anubhav and Siddharth Kulkarni, funded by GBIF BIFA and co-funded through the participation fees.