

Raman Sukumar's fascination with elephants began by chance. Growing up in Chennai, at the age of 15 something changed in him completely. He began to see the natural world around him and started reading about the general destruction of nature that was going on. He jokes that there may have been some latent affinity for nature in his younger years because his grandmother used to call him a 'vanvasi' (forest dweller) – and that was well before the city boy had ever even been to a forest!.

Prof. Sukumar went on to study Botany and graduated from the University of Madras with a bachelor's and master's degree in his chosen field. He had by then decided to become a conservation scientist. In 1979 he began his studies for a doctoral degree at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

Prof. Sukumar began with a detailed study of the ecology and management of the Asian elephants in southern India as part of his doctoral research at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. His interest in the study of elephants grew over the next decade as he spent months in the field observing the animals go about their daily lives. His pioneering scientific study on the ecology of elephant-human interactions was published as a monograph by the Cambridge University Press in 1989 and fetched him the Presidential Award of the Chicago Zoological Society.

Prof. Sukumar joined the faculty of the Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES) at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), in 1986, and soon organized a long-term ecological research programme in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, the country's first such reserve, in whose design he had played a key role. From 1997 to 2003 he served as Chair of the Asian Elephant Specialist Group of IUCN – The World Conservation Union.

Prof. Sukumar has been honoured and recognised by the international conservation community for his efforts to conserve varied habitats and wildlife, using the Asian elephant as a flagship species. Among the many awards and recognitions are the Presidential Award of the Chicago Zoological Society (1989), the Order of the Golden Ark (1997), the Whitley Gold Award for International Nature Conservation (2003), the Whitley Friends Award (2003), the TN Khoshoo Memorial Award for Conservation (2004), and the International Cosmos Prize (2006). He is also a Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences (2000), the Indian National Science Academy (2005) and was recently awarded the JC Bose National Fellowship of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India. He has also been a Fulbright Fellow at Princeton University and Adjunct Professor at Columbia University, New York.

Prof. Sukumar has been a member of many national advisory bodies in the field of conservation including the Indian Board for Wildlife and Project Elephant Steering Committee of the Government of India.

Prof. Sukumar has endeavoured to bring objective, science-based policies into wildlife conservation and management. He has over fifty scholarly publications in the area of elephant biology, tropical forest ecology, climate change and nature conservation, and has authored four books on elephants.

Prof. Sukumar is presently Professor at Centre for Ecological Sciences at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.