



ROLE OF NATURAL HISTORY E-GROUPS IN BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN SCIENTIST AND CITIZENS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO CONSERVATION OF INDIAN WILDLIFE

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Presentation Layout

- 1) **Overview**
- 2) **Introduction** : Egroups and Indian Egroups on Natural History
3. **Methods**
4. **Results**: Members and their benefits from the Egroups
4. **Discussion** :Role of Egroups in Wildlife Conservation
5. **Conclusion**: How to start an Egroup?

Overview

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- Natural History Egroups have been prevalent in India for more than a decade
- Digital Photography boosted the Egroup activities
- Egroups have now become a social group for all like-minded individuals
- Egroups have become a congregation of scientists and amateurs reducing the intellectual gap.
- Egroups made collaborations easy.
- Moderators and experts on the Egroups perform a selfless duty towards nature conservation.

Introduction: What are Egroups?

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- Started in 1997, **eGroups.com** was an email list management web site. The site allowed users to create their own mailing lists and allowed others to sign up for membership on the list. It was bought by Yahoo! In 2000 and became part of Yahoo! Groups (Source Wikipedia)
- **Yahoo! Groups** is one of the world's largest collections of online discussion boards.
- Currently most popular egroups belong to Yahoogroups, Google Groups, Facebook Groups

Introduction: How Egroups Function?

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- ❑ Group messages can be read and posted by e-mail or on the Group's webpage like a web forum.
- ❑ An email sent to the Group ends up in every member's email Inbox.
- ❑ Members can choose whether to receive individual, daily digest or Special Delivery e-mails, or simply read Group posts on the Group's web site
- ❑ Groups can be created with public or member-only access.
- ❑ Some groups are closed and some open
- ❑ Some groups are moderated or un-moderated
- ❑ The Egroup interaction is largely social and free.

Introduction: Indian Egroups on Natural History

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Names of Some Egroups

Amphibian India	Insect India
Birds of Mumbai	Insectlovers
BNHS Navi Mumbai Chapter	Leadbiodiv
Butterfly India	Mumbai Naturalists
Diversity India	ReptileIndia
Dragonfly India	SpiderIndia
FungiIndia	Treepix
Indian Birds	Wildflower India
Indianmoths	Diversity India

How these Egroups function?

- The primary aim of these Egroups is to create a platform of like-minded individuals who can learn and share through exchange of information virtually.
- Members largely join the group voluntarily
- Experts are invited to join the group
- These groups encourage posting of wildlife pictures which are identified by the experts on the group
- Amateurs can post their queries which are either answered by the experts or by other members.
- The group picture archives becomes excellent source of future reference.



Introduction: Egroups Initiated by BNHS

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The aim was to provide a common platform for our course participants and volunteers.

Indianmoths was established with a sole purpose to create awareness about moths

- ❑ In 2000, Insectlovers yahoogroup was formed
- ❑ In 2004, Leadbiodiv yahoogroup was formed
- ❑ In 2004, bnhsvolunteers yahoogroup was formed
- ❑ In 2005, Indianmoths yahoogroup was formed

What are people saying about virtual learning?

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Keef (2012), Blogging and social media as learning tools- quotes

- Blogging organizes and promotes one's research
- You get feedback from other professionals
- Postings reduce the “distance” between professionals
- Active students can intensify their learning spiral
- It forces you to do your homework.

Jarche (2010), Network Learning: Working Smarter- quotes

- **Seeking:** Seeking is the process of keeping up to date in your field.
- **Sensing:** Validating, Synthesizing, Presenting, and Customizing
- **Sharing:** Joining a Community



Methods

Online Survey

88 respondents (52 completed the survey)

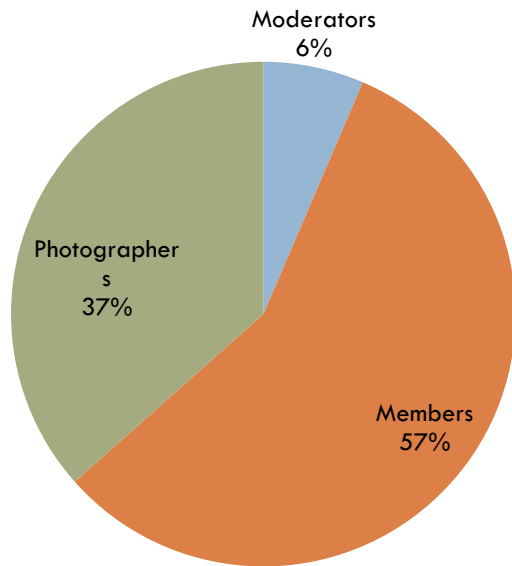
Members of 17 Egroups

43 male, 9 female respondents

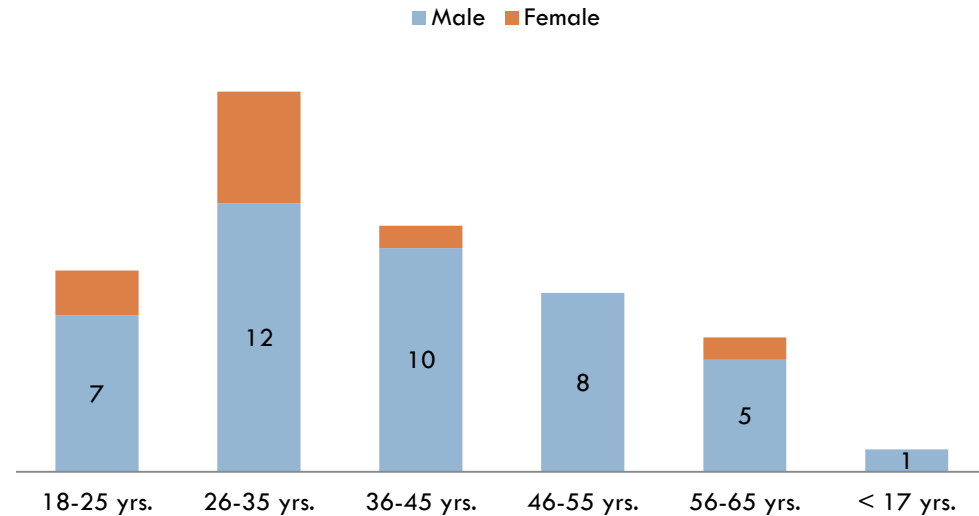
Results: Profile of Group Members

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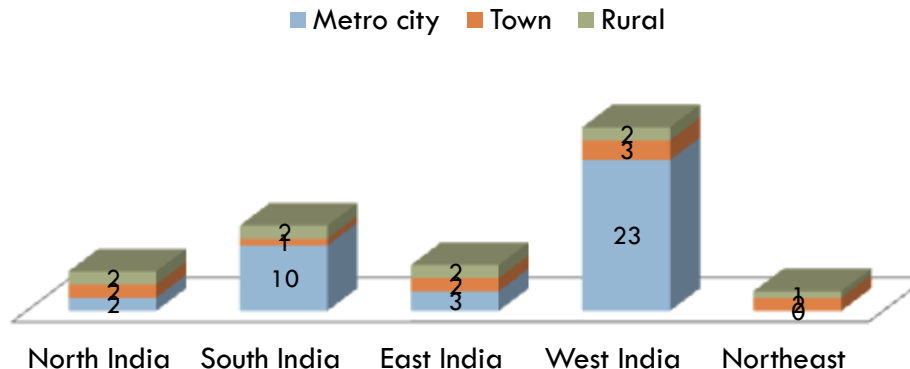
Who are the Users?



Age Profile



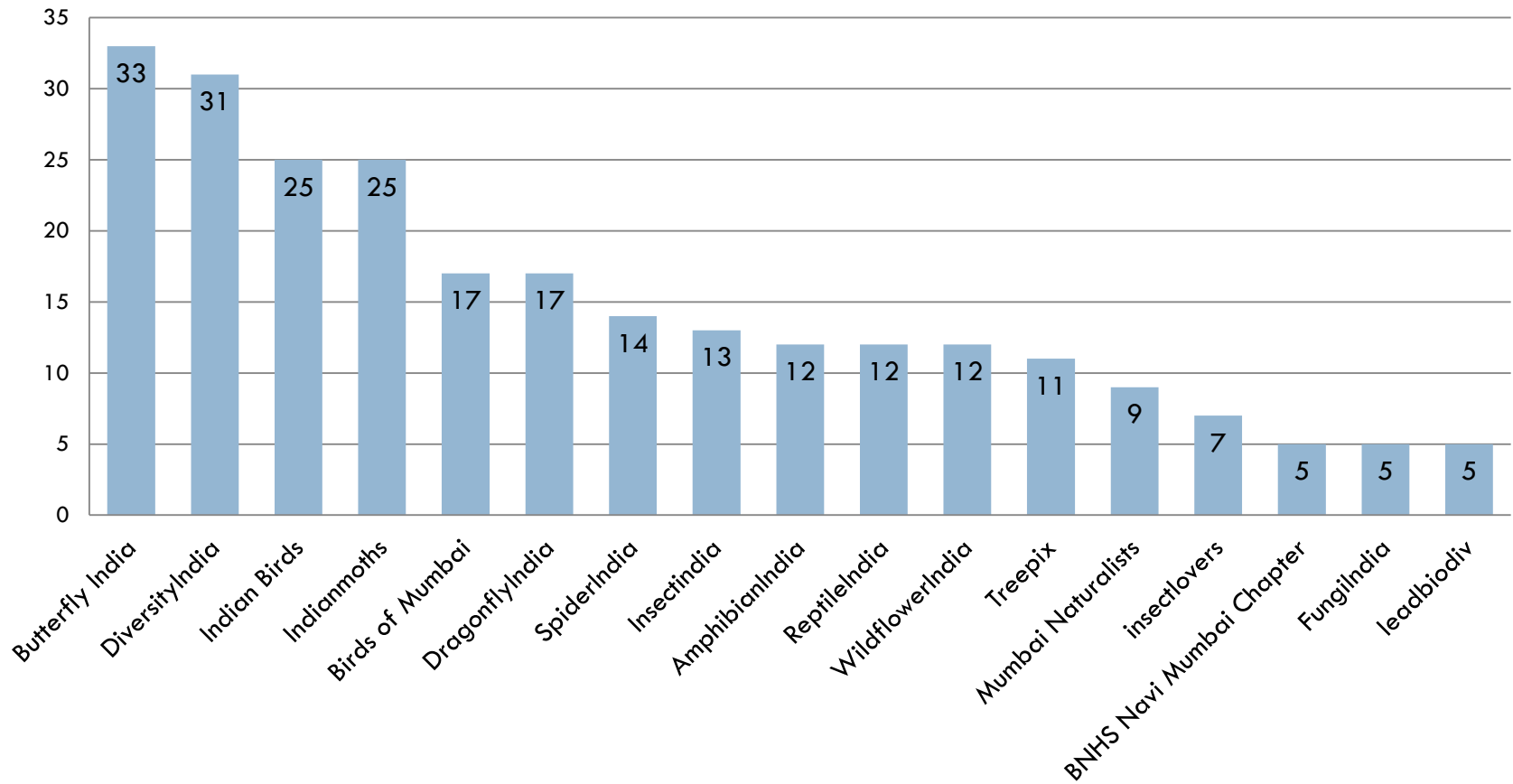
Where are they from?



Results: Egroup Popularity

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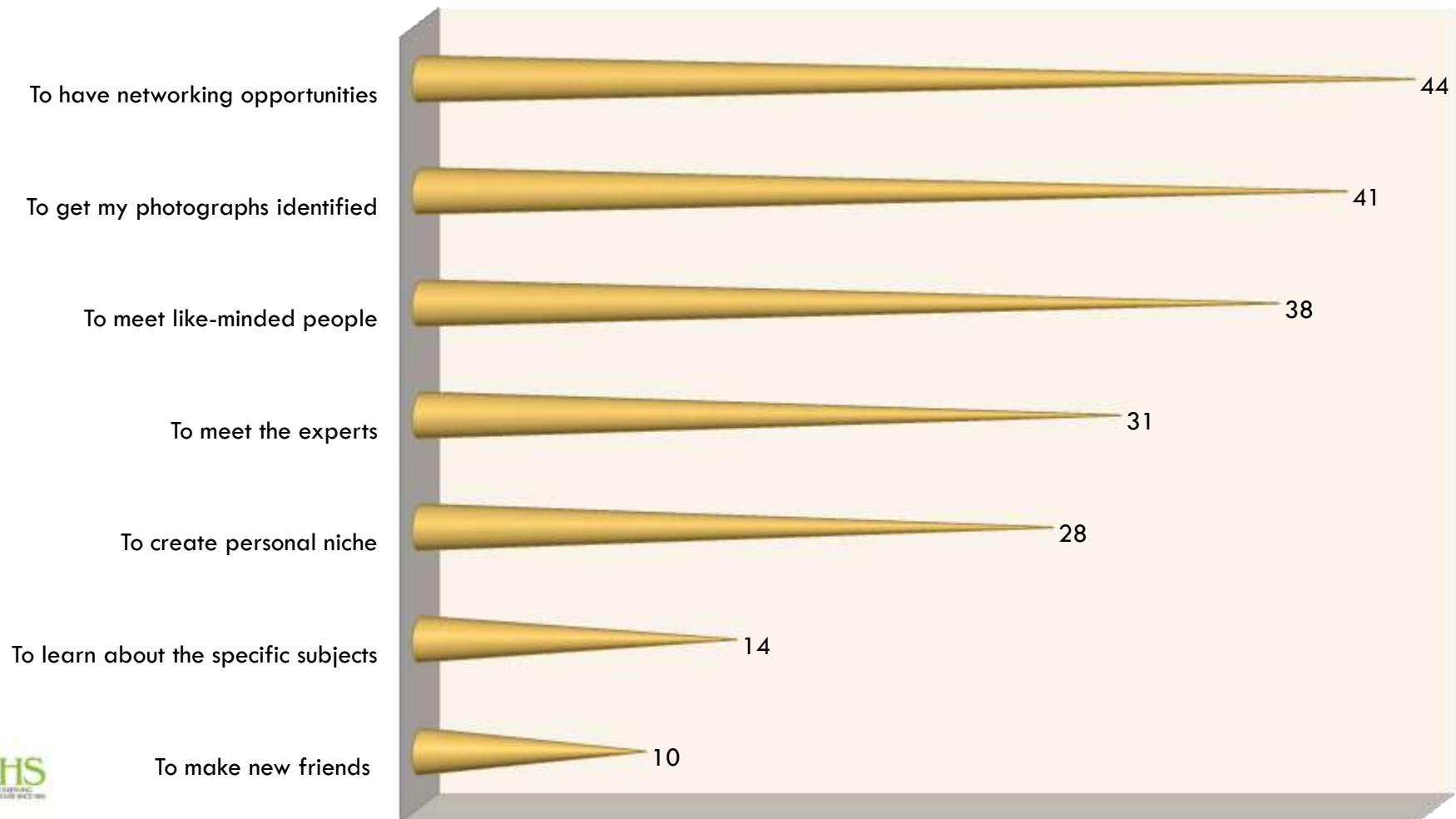
Which are popular egroups?



Results: Reasons for Joining the Egroups

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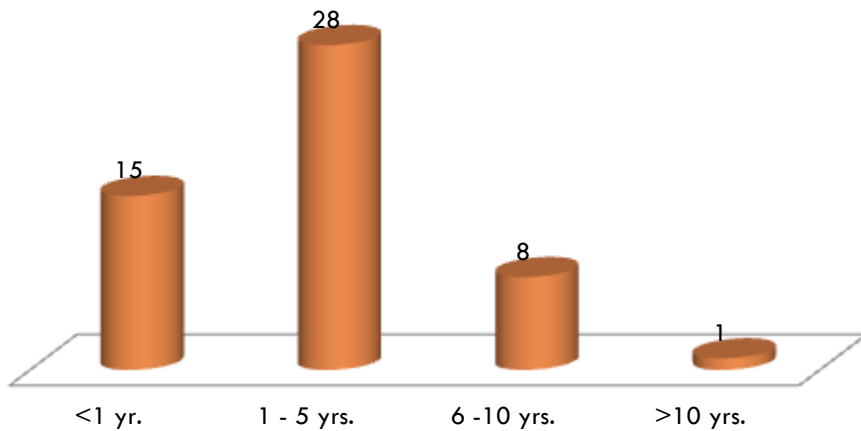
Why do they join the groups?



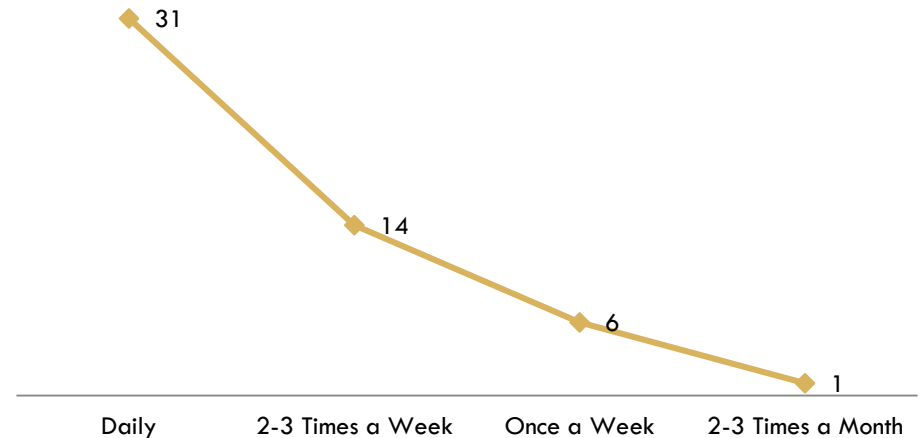
Results: Engagement of the Members

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How long they have been the members?



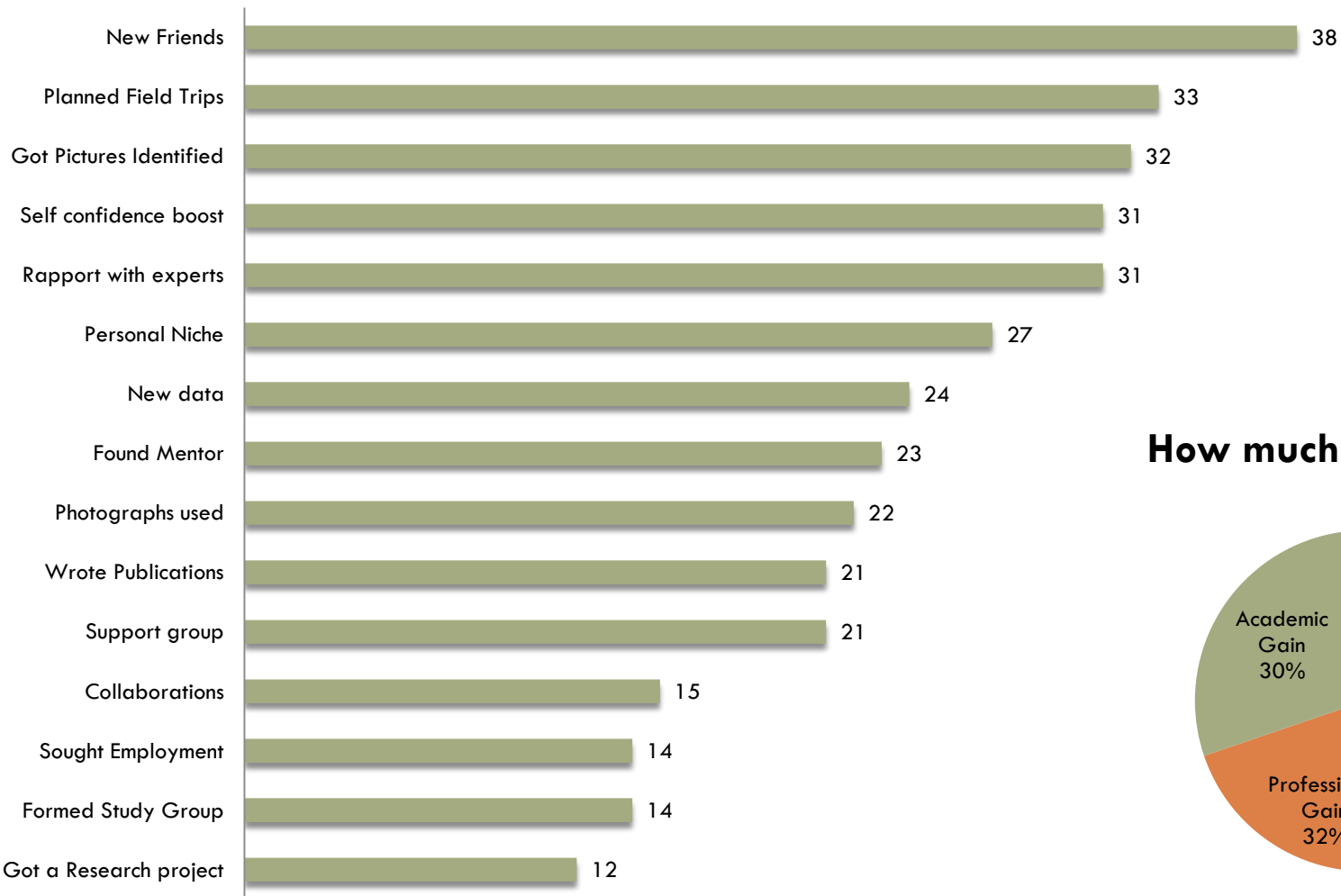
How frequently they access the groups?



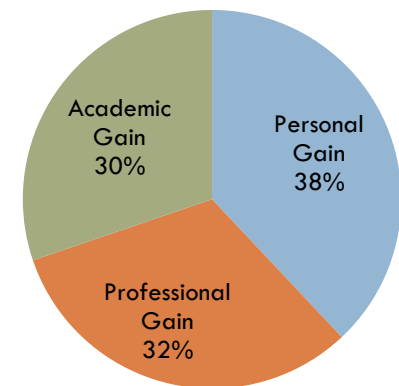
Results: Benefits from the Egroups

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How they benefitted from the groups?



How much they gained?

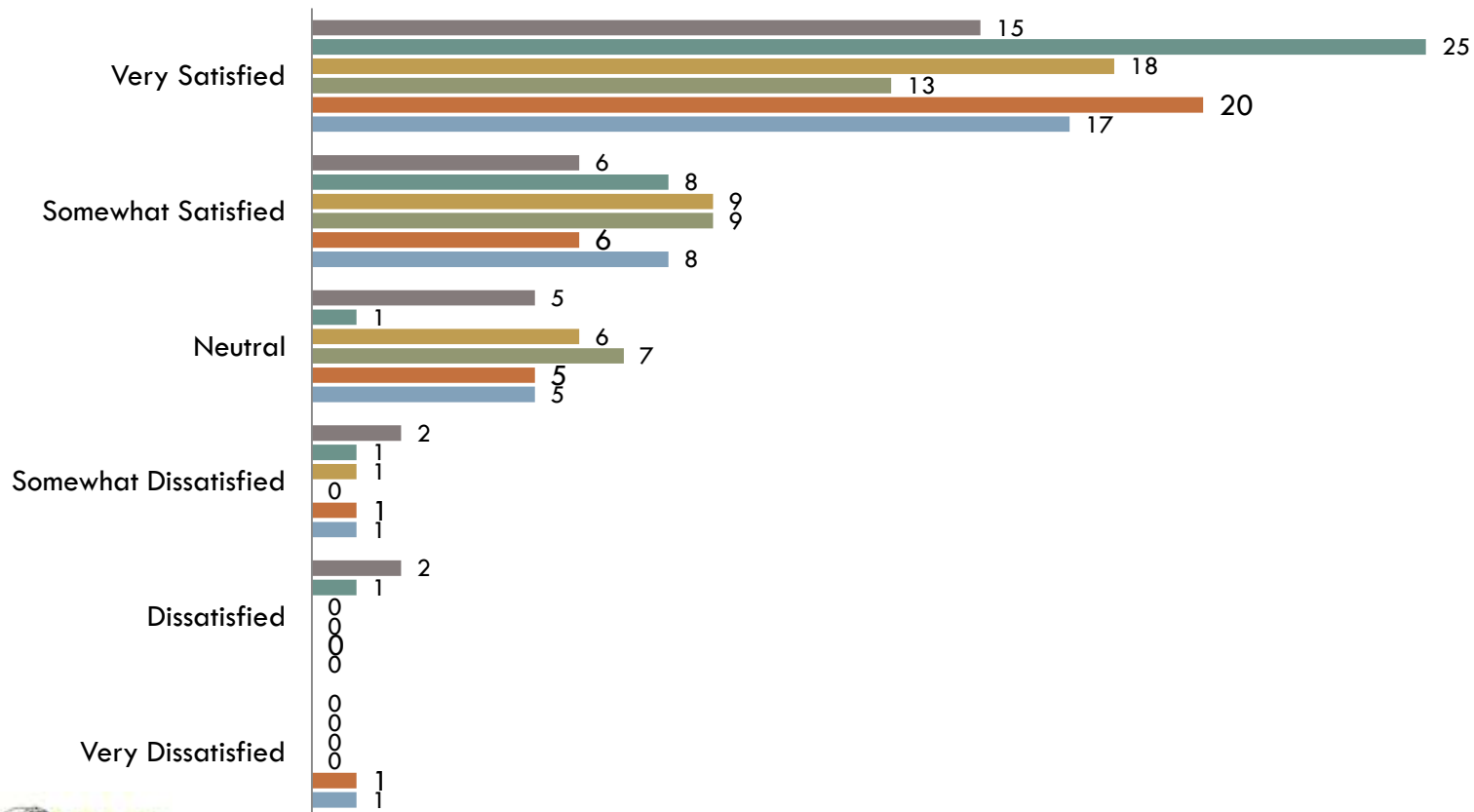


Results: Level of Satisfaction

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How satisfied are they?

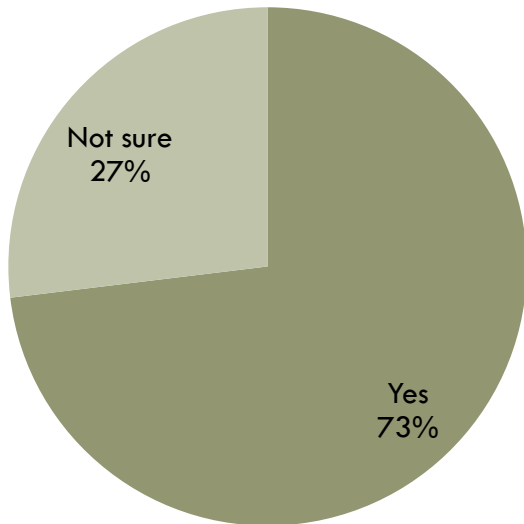
- Moderator's role
- New learnings
- Interactivity levels of the group
- Interaction with other members
- Interaction with experts on the group
- Photo identification



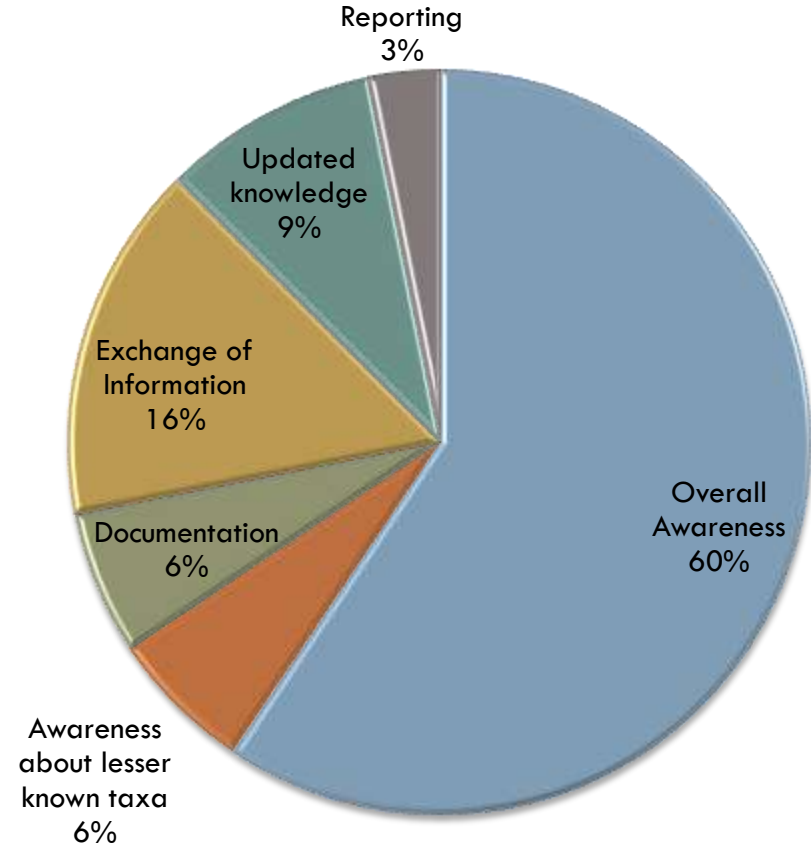
Results: Egroups and Conservation

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Do you think Egroups help in Conservation?



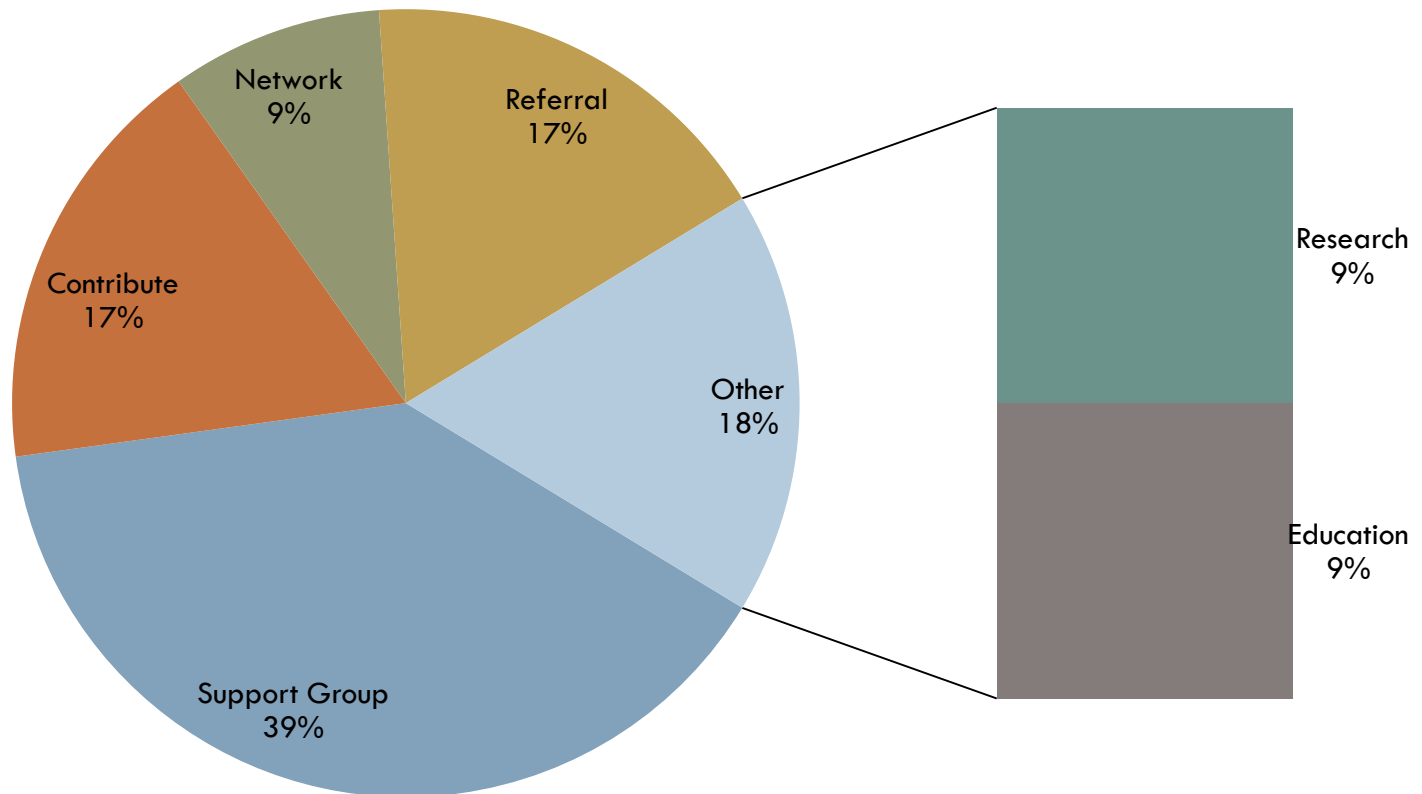
How Egroups can help conservation?



Results: Member's Contribution

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How would member's help?



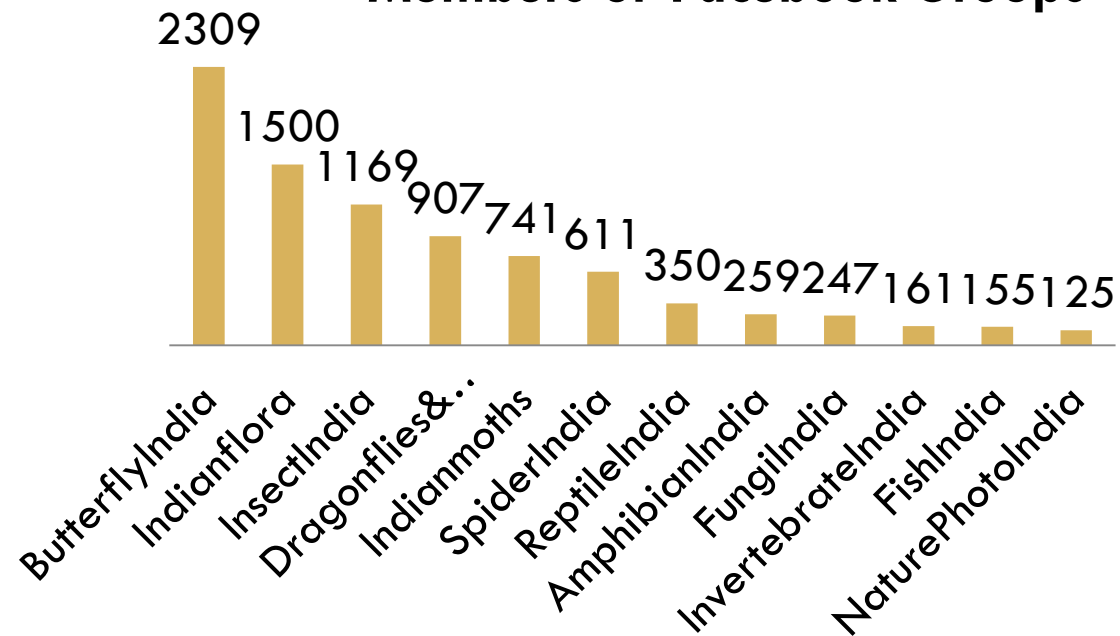
Discussion: How Egroups have helped Indian Wildlife?

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□ Connections

- Vijay Barve through Diversity.org established 14 Egroups on Yahoo, Facebook and Flickr has created a common platform for Indian nature enthusiast to connect with each other.
- G.M. Garg established Efloraofindia (earlier Indiantreepix) which is the largest Google e-group on Indian flora with more than 1950 members.
- Nitin Jamdar established Birds of Mumbai Yahoogroup on Mumbai Birds with 1166 members

Members of Facebook Groups



Discussion: How Egroups have helped Indian Wildlife?

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□ **Contribute**

- Members wrote books on butterflies
- Members took up to academic research on Lepidoptera
- Members wrote research papers

□ **Collaborate**

- Members helped in discovery of new species of a moth
- Members were able to collaborate with international experts
- Members took up research project

Discussion: How Citizens and Scientists worked together?

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Scientists

- The virtual world made scientists from all over world more accessible.
- The willingness of these experts to be part of the group gave boosted exchange of knowledge.
- Foreign scientists learned about Indian species and gathered data on species distribution.

Citizens

- For first time they were able to establish rapport with scientists from India and abroad in easiest way
- First hand guidance from the experts helped in grooming future biologists
- Their species pictures were readily identified, appreciated and used in publications.

Conclusion

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- Egroups play an important role in creating awareness towards Indian wildlife which is first step towards conservation.
- Egroups have highlighted the significance of lesser known taxa such as moths, spiders, fungi and others
- Egroups though started with Yahoogroups have now converged in to Facebook groups which are more interactive
- Digital photography and access to experts has been the backbone of all Egroups
- Egroups are the excellent platforms to engage youth
- Owing to the membership of the Egroups, there is a potential for scientists to use this people power to progress their conservation efforts.
- Egroups are wonderful platform to initiate citizen science projects.

Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the Aichi Targets: Egroups Contribution

Strategic Goal A: Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society

Target 1: By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

Conclusion: How to start an Egroup?

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- Think about a topic and an appropriate name, check if there aren't any existing groups
- Identify the platform (Facebook, Google, Yahoo)
- Write an appealing introduction for the group
- Add facts and pictures to make the profile attractive
- Promote the group through email, FB posts, Blogs and so on.
- Invite Members from other relevant groups
- Invite experts to help with the Members' queries.

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- <http://www.ombrella.net/marketing-channel/social-media-marketing/>
- www.sustainablejournalism.org



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