ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To do what is close to one’s heart is actually easy, particularly when your family, friends and organizations support you in this venture, even if your education background and work experience is completely different from what you want to do! From being an ISRO (Indian Space Research Organization) satellite project manager to a practicing wildlife biologist, my journey has been long, but never arduous, thanks to such unfailing support that I enjoyed during this transition. It is my earnest endeavor here to remember contributions of several people and institutions, and sincerely thank them for their efforts in helping me realize my dream. The names I mention below are not exhaustive, but indicative of the enormous support I received at every stage and I am truly grateful to all those, named and unnamed, who cared to help me tread this path.

I am most grateful to the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), New York and the Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS), Bangalore, which supported me right from the beginning of my career as wildlife biologist and continues to do so. Without their long term and generous support, I wonder if I would have dared to let go of my career in ISRO!

US Geological Survey’s Patuxent Wildlife Research Centre at Laurel, Maryland hosted me for nearly seven months during data analysis stage. WCS-India Program office gave me ample space and freedom to
complete my thesis work. I am deeply indebted to these organizations. I am also grateful to Manipal University, Manipal, for facilitating my registration as a doctoral candidate and encouraged me in numerous ways. I particularly thank Dr. H. N. Udaya Shankar and Dr. C. S. Adiga for their assistance.

My guide Ullas Karanth and co-guide Jagdish Krishnaswamy, provided different perspectives, which were hugely helpful in shaping this thesis. I have greatly benefitted from their detailed inputs, thoughtful comments and critical review of my draft chapters. Jim Nichols believed that I had a very good conceptual basis for my thesis and introduced me to Andy Royle to learn about all the nuances of hierarchical spatial modeling. Their inputs and insights were extremely crucial during data analysis and they both guided me to think through the problem and helped me find solutions every time I got stuck. I particularly owe a lot to Andy Royle for the incredible patience he showed in guiding a hard core ‘dumb’ field biologist like me. Jim and Andy also found time to review early drafts of my two chapters and provided valuable inputs. Beth Gardner and Jim Hines taught me fundamentals of WinBUGS and working in R environment and both were always there to pull me out of trouble. I also greatly benefitted from intellectually stimulating discussions I had with Bill Link and John Sauer at Patuxent. In the formative stages of my thesis concept, discussions with Len Thomas, Steve Buckland and Barry Noon were immensely useful. I am most grateful to all of these individuals for their contributions.
While I was in USA, Judd Howell facilitated my stay in Patuxent. Robert Reynold generously helped me browse through books and periodicals at the library of National Museum of Natural History at Washington DC. Friendship and warmth of Julien Martin is unforgettable.

Back in India, V. Srinivas, Arjun Gopalaswamy, Jagdish Krishnaswamy and Ajith Kumar at CWS helped in clarifying my thoughts on conceptual issues. Javaji Amarnath, Raghavendra Mogaroy, Nagaraj Bhat and Narendra Patil spared no stone unturned in ensuring timely completion of my field surveys and Phaniraj and Mohan provided superb administrative support. Srinivas helped me wade through swamps of GIS domain, Arjun Gopalaswamy assisted me in transect data entry validation, Raghavendra helped me in compiling vegetation and human impact data, and my entire field team was always there to help me, both in and off the field, in a myriad ways. G. V. Reddy generously shared a part of his data from Hatghat Reserve Forest including his trained field assistants, Shankara, C. U. Santosh and M. N. Santosh who provided extraordinary support in the field. I was fortunate to benefit from never-tiring, skilled local field assistants who enthusiastically assisted me in the field. Ravi Chellam provided unconditional support to complete my thesis and all the senior staff of WCS-India program helped me to focus my efforts by taking off chunks of my official responsibilities. P. G. Veena and Divya Panicker
were always there to help locate reprints on innumerable occasions. I thank them all sincerely for their full support.

Many Forest Officers were appreciative of my deep-rooted interest in field biology and encouraged my career shift. I was fortunate to meet a number of good *foresters* across 14 sites from 7 states (including Karnataka) in India during my 12-year long field stint that preceded my thesis work which began in 2006. These officers and their field staff demonstrated through their exemplary work how individuals can make a difference in spite of being trapped in a deteriorating system and infused in me a sense of optimism for the future of wildlife in India. Their efforts also brought in a sharp focus on my research interests and established dire needs for critical scientific inputs to sustain wildlife in remaining forest patches. Dr. Rajesh Gopal was the first to suggest to me, way back in 1996 when I first met him in Kanha, to pursue a PhD study that’s useful to managers. The list of foresters who encouraged my interest (but wanted to remain nameless) is long but I would like to express my deep gratitude to all those who nurtured me and are fighting against all odds to save wildlife. Karnataka Forest Department and several of its officers showed keen interest in my work and provided full support and encouragement to implement the field project. None personifies this better than K. M. Chinnappa, who spotted my interest in 1986 and together with Ullas Karanth, put me through the rigors of field biology. In addition, I would

Ullas Karanth mobilized support and hired me to work for WCS in 1994, but more importantly, through his work ethics, never-say-die approach and incredible social acumen, inspired me and channelized my interests to find a purpose and goal for my exuberance of interest in wildlife. Apart from guiding me through the PhD process, Ullas always found time whenever I wanted and invariably on every single occasion he brought clarity to my thinking through his amazing insights into the world of conservation biology.

Akarsha, Manish, Narasimha, Veeresha, Amit, Devcharan, Bharath, Robin, Nandini, Killi, Chaitanya, Praneet and other members of Growing Wild and Wildcat-C; my ISRO friends: Kumuda, Govinda, Kalpana, Aravind, Paddu, Sharath, Lokesh, Renji; my childhood friends: B. G. Jagadisha (Bagoja), Ganesh Babu, Bindu, Shankara – I am eternally grateful to all of them. I particularly remember my friend the late Krishna Narain, who pulled me into WILPEG, a Bangalore-based wildlife NGO and pushed me to pursue a PhD degree.

And, there are some people who prefer to stand silently behind me and who don’t even want to be named: my parents, in-laws, brothers and sisters….

I dedicate this thesis to my wife Rohini and my daughter Varsha, who bore the brunt of my long absences away from home, yet deciding to provide rock-solid support and even joining me occasionally to only add fuel to my wildlife adventure fire. Without their understanding and courage, I would simply not have completed my thesis.