



WWF

KERALA

2024

March-April 2024

Mruthika

Conservation Highlights of WWF-India, Kerala State Office

FROM THE STATE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Today, I viewed the recording of the first session of the webinar series by UNESCO-UNFCCC ON Climate Change Education. The topic was Green Schools. UNESCO is promoting Green Schools globally, especially in the background of the increasing demand from global youth for quality Climate Change Education, proclaimed openly during the recently concluded COP sessions. Green Schools involve physical aspects like reducing paper usage, water usage, energy usage, and food wastage, creating more green spaces (which directly has a bearing on the social and emotional well-being of students), etc., but not just that, but going beyond and creating mindset changes and behavioural shifts. Green Schools are expected to be "Lighthouses" for the community. Green Schools has a Whole-School approach advocating for students and teachers as "Green Squads" to become agents of change in their society, starting in their homes with their families. The four pillars are (1) Greening Schools (2) Greening School Curriculum, (3) Greening Capacity of Educators/Teachers, (4) Greening Communities. It advocates "Learn and Live what you Learn".

To achieve this, we need to create a transformative learning experience and environment. Educating students in Green Schools goes beyond the school environment, as students of today are responsible citizens of tomorrow, and we can expect them to bring these qualities to their workspaces also. The various challenges on the way that can be converted into opportunities are (1) lack of awareness on the journey to establishing Green Schools, (2) lack of capacity building, (3) lack of long-term vision and support, (4) lack of a global framework for Green Schools, etc. When moving forward, we should ensure that we have local adaptability in implementation, Climate Justice should be ensured for all, and we follow the package of Best Practices already practiced around the world, and not reinvent the wheel again.

The One Earth - One Home (Oru Bhoomi - Oru Bhavanam when translated in Malayalam) environment education program developed by WWF-India was such a unique program. But when offered to the Education Department, Government of Kerala, a few years back, they did not accept it on the premise that they did not encourage a whole-school and long-term approach and that they could not allow baseline and end-line assessment by an outside agency. Thinking critically about Kerala and its education system, we boast that we are far ahead of other states in our education, health, and other sectors. If so, the questions to be answered are how many Green Schools can we showcase from Kerala, in its full sense? Many a time, all our claims connected to green are based on the physical aspect of greening, i.e., planting saplings, raising kitchen gardens, setting up medicinal plant gardens, etc.

Are our schools providing platforms for transformative learning experiences? Are our teachers and students agents of change in their communities? Are our students able to influence their families even? So sad to say, unfortunately, as of now, Kerala is grappling with the serious problem of drug abuse and addiction among school children. And this has multiple negative repercussions in society – failing love affairs, suicides, murders, road rage, bike accidents, friction with parents, etc. When interacting with teachers, many unequivocally say that the issue of drug abuse and addiction has gone beyond control and correction.

Where and how did we fail as a society? Can we identify and accept our mistakes? Do we have the guts to stand up and correct them? No time for a blame game. It really needs a top-down approach with the active involvement of all stakeholders to make the needed corrections on a war footing, or we lose our next generation.

Renjan Mathew Varghese
State Director

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN NATURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Global

Activist who led grassroots campaign to save Europe's largest saltwater lagoon wins 'Green Nobel'

Teresa Vicente, 61, led a grassroots campaign to save Spain's Mar Menor from ecological collapse. Her efforts helped a new law to be passed in 2022, giving the lagoon the legal

right to conservation, protection and damage remediation. Vicente is one of this year's seven winners of the Goldman Environmental Prize, known as the 'Green Nobel' which honours grassroots activists and leaders from across the globe for achievements in protecting the natural world. The recipients were selected from about 100 nominees. (Source: *Euro News*, 29 March 2024)

Majority of recent CO₂ emissions linked to just 57 producers: Report

"The vast majority of planet-warming carbondioxide emissions since 2016 can be traced to a group of just 57 fossil fuels and cement producers," researchers said on April 4.

“From 2016 to 2022, the 57 entities including nation-states, state-owned firms and investor-owned companies produced 80% of the world’s CO2 emissions from fossil fuels and cement production,” said the Carbon Majors report by non-profit think tank InfluenceMap. “The world’s top three CO2-emitting companies in the period were state-owned oil firm Saudi Aramco, Russia’s state-owned energy giant Gazprom and state-owned producer Coal India,” the report said. InfluenceMap said its findings showed that a relatively small group of emitters were responsible for the bulk of ongoing CO2 emissions, and it aimed to increase transparency around which governments and companies were causing climate change. (Source: *The Hindu*, 5 April 2024)

National

Going green | Myriad hues for festival of colours in a non-toxic way

Experiments at a chemical laboratory in Nagaland have yielded a new range of non-toxic colours made from indigenous plants, offering Holi revellers a safe alternative to chemical-laced pigments. The “benign” powdered hues, made from edible items such as mustard leaves, coriander, spinach, beetroot, mulberry, turmeric, rose, hibiscus, carrot, and rhododendron, were developed by the Corrosion and Electrochemistry Research Group (CERG) of Nagaland University’s Department of Chemistry. The eco-friendly colours can have several applications beyond the festival, and could potentially fuel small-scale industries in the geographically challenged State, the group’s researchers said. (Source: *The Hindu*, 24 March 2024)

States offer up thousands of hectares of ‘degraded’ forest land for green credits

Weeks after the Union Environment Ministry announced the rules for its Green Credit Programme (GCP), ten States have identified parcels of degraded forest land, amounting to about 3,853 hectares, that will be available for individuals, groups, public and private sector units to earn – and potentially trade – green credits. Under the scheme, registered and approved entities can pay to finance afforestation projects in specific tracts of degraded forest and wasteland. The actual afforestation will be carried out by State Forest departments. Two years after planting – and following an evaluation by the International Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), an autonomous body of the Environment Ministry – each planted tree could be worth one ‘green credit’. These green credits can then be used by companies which have diverted forest land for non-forest purposes and razed thousands of trees to offset some of their obligations under India’s compensatory afforestation laws. (Source: *The Hindu*, 7 April 2024)

Right against climate change a distinct fundamental and human right, SC judgment

The Supreme Court has recognised a much-felt, but less articulated right against the adverse effects of climate change as a distinct fundamental right in the Constitution. “It is yet to be articulated that the people have a right against the adverse effects of climate change. This is perhaps because this right and the right to a clean environment are two sides of the same coin. As the havoc caused by climate change increases year-by-year, it becomes necessary to articulate this as a distinct right. It is recognised by Articles 14 (right to equality) and 21 (right to life),” the Supreme Court observed in a judgment released on April 6. The judgment came in a case connected with the survival of the endangered Great Indian Bustard species. (Source: *The Hindu*, 8 April 2024)

State

CSIR-NIIST unveils innovative solution for biomedical waste management

An innovative technology for the safe, sustainable and cost-effective management of biomedical waste, developed by a team of scientists at the CSIR-National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (CSIR-NIIST), was unveiled at a one-day Biomedical Waste Management Conclave held at CSIR-NIIST campus. The search for alternatives, which are innovative and environment-friendly, has led CSIR-NIIST to develop a dual disinfection-solidification system that can spontaneously disinfect and immobilise pathogenic biomedical waste from operation theatres and laboratories and convert it into value-added soil additives. Using this advanced technology, hazardous biomedical waste can be disinfected and disposed of at its source, at a very low cost, eliminating all risks of spills and occupational exposure. Director of NIIST, C. Anandharamakrishnan, said that the technology that CSIR-NIIST has developed for converting pathogenic biomedical waste into value added soil additives is a perfect example of the ‘Waste to Wealth’ concept. CSIR-NIIST has transferred the technology to its industry partner, the Angamaly-based firm Bio Vastum Solutions. (Source: *The Hindu*, 27 March 2024)

On a mission to protect the depleting mangrove ecosystem

For the last more than a decade, T. P. Murukesan, a fisherman, has been doing something profound for the environment. He has made it a mission to check the dwindling mangrove population along the coastal stretches in Ernakulam. The disheartening sight of the depleting mangrove ecosystem owing to massive urbanisation pushed him to undertake a mission to save the green cover. Thanks to his sustained efforts to restore the vanishing mangrove

stretches, the 58-year-old native of Malippuram, Vypeen has nurtured over 1 lakh mangrove saplings set up in his eight-cent property in the past 11 years and has planted around 50,000 saplings in Puthuvype, Elankunnapuzha, Njarakkal, Cherai, Kannamaly, Vallarpadam, Mulavukadu, and Valanthakad. A skilled fisherman and mason, he has also distributed mangrove seedlings to nature lovers interested in participating in the restoration initiatives. (Source: *The Hindu*, 25 March 2024)

SPECIES OF THE ISSUE

Common Rosefinch (*Carpodacus erythrinus*)



Also called Scarlet Rosefinch, it is the most widespread and common Rosefinch of Asia and Europe. Medium-sized, dumpy finch with a stubby bill. Male are distinctive with a red head, breast, and rump, brown eye-mask, and white belly. The amount of red varies with age. Females and young males are dull-coloured with yellowish-brown above, brighter on the rump and greyer on head; buff below. Far-carrying, whistled, typically 3-note song is memorable.

In winter they are found from southern Iran to south-east China, India, Burma, and Indochina. They are found in summer in thickets, woodland and forest edges near rivers and in winter in gardens and orchards, wetlands and locally in dry oak woods.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

1. Which bird, also known as the sea parrot, can carry up to 10 small fish crosswise in its triangular beak?
2. Some species of which bird can rotate their heads and look behind them?

3. Which bird makes the longest annual migration?
4. Adélie, emperor, king, and Galapagos are all species of which bird?
5. Which is the second largest living bird?
6. Which of these birds is a pink, long-necked water bird?
7. The name of which flightless bird is derived from the call of the male of the species?
8. Which bird is also known as Pharaoh's chicken?
9. Which bird is also known as the lily-trotter because of its ability to walk on floating vegetation?
10. The common name of *Sagittarius serpentarius* is _____.

Answers: 1. puffin, 2. Owl, 3. Arctic Tern, 4. Penguin, 5. Emu, 6. Flamingo, 7. Kiwi, 8. Egyptian vulture, 9. Jacana, 10. Secretary Bird

ACTIVITIES OF WWF-INDIA KERALA STATE OFFICE

Nature Connect

Field session at Punchakkari for the students of the College of Agriculture, Vellayani

A.K. Sivakumar, Senior Education Officer, led a session on Bird Watching on 17th March 2024 from 6.30 to 9.00 am in and around Punchakkari for the students of the College of Agriculture, Thiruvananthapuram. Twenty-two students and two teachers attended the session, and they found 36 species of birds, including the endangered Black-headed Ibis and Oriental Darter. They were introduced to different types of egrets, herons, storks, etc.



Dragonfly Festival

The prizes for the winners of the Dragonfly Festival Mini Mela were given away on 2nd March. The winners were asked to come to Christ (Deemed to be) University, Nodal Office for the prize distribution. Mr. Renjan Mathew Varghese spoke to the students and parents about Dragonfly Festival and other activities of WWF-India. Dr. Deepa Mangalam,

Coordinator of Christ University, Nodal Office was the chief guest. She spoke about the importance of environmental education and how impressed she was with the students participating in such events. She also gave away the prizes on the occasion.



Coastwise Marine Festival

Kerala State Office conducted an Inter-Collegiate Quiz Competition titled “Blue Matters” on 2nd March 2024 in Thiruvananthapuram under the Coastwise Project. Dept. of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, University of Kerala, was the Knowledge Partner of this Quiz, and Christ (deemed to be a University), Nodal Office, Vazhuthacaud, at Thiruvananthapuram was the Logistic Partner. Followed by an introduction session by Renjan, three videos made by the interns in connection with Coastwise were screened. Dr A. Bijukumar, Head of the Dept of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, University of Kerala, addressed the gathering. The team comprising Nisanth H.P. and Chinnu Vishwanathan, Research Fellows, Dept. of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, led the quiz. There were registrations of 25 teams from 17 colleges. Navaneeth Sini George and Asif Shereef from Fatima Mata National College, Kollam, emerged as the winners.



Beach Combing for Birds in Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam Districts

Birder Volunteers from WWF-India explored the Poovar Beach in search of shorebirds on 16th March 2024 from 6.30 to 10.30 am. The three-member team recorded 25 species of which three are migratory. They reported one Greater Sand Plover, one Common Sandpiper and six Blue-tailed Bee Eaters. As it was observed that many of the migrants have returned, the Beach Combing of 2023-24 ended in March 2024. The next year’s Beach Combing will start by August or September 2024.



ECHO

The ECHO program is progressing well in Kerala. Currently, there are eight colleges participating in the program. A K Sivakumar, Senior Education Officer, visited the Department of Environmental Sciences at Malayalam University, Tirur, and took part in their Upcycling Lab Inauguration on March 13.



Tide Turners Plastic Challenge

Tide Turners Plastic Challenge Orientation Sessions were conducted in six colleges, namely, the Government Women’s College, Thiruvananthapuram, St. Gregorios College, Kottarakkara, SN Ayurveda College, Puthur, Kottarakkara, Sir Syed College of Arts & Science, Talipparamba, Kannur, SN College, Kannur, Malayalam University, Tirur in the month of March. There was a total outreach of around 455.





Two workshops were conducted under Tide Turners Plastic Challenge in April. WWF-India conducted the two workshops in association with ATREE-CERC, Alappuzha.

Life Jacket Skilling Workshop

The Life Jacket Skilling Workshop was conducted on 17-18th April. Twenty-six women participated in the program. The two-day program was inaugurated by Fr. Thomas Kulathungal, Executive Director of Changanassery Social Service Society (CHASS). The resource persons Anusweta Deb and Champa Deb taught the participants to make life jackets out of used plastic rice sacks and plastic water bottles, addressing a two-fold issue in Kerala – flooding and plastic pollution. Jojo T.D., Project Manager at ATREE-CERC spoke on the occasion and familiarized the participants with the importance of such a skilling workshop for Kerala, especially Kuttanad area in Alappuzha district, which mostly lies below the mean sea level. Ambreen Khan, Ashley Wilkinson, A.K. Sivakumar, Anushreedha S.S. and Jeyaraj S. coordinated the program. WWF-India Volunteer, Murukan Pareparambil was of great help during the event.



Youth Advocacy Workshop

The Youth Advocacy Workshop was conducted on April 19–20 at Karmasadan, Alappuzha. Eighty-eight selected students from various colleges participated in the workshop. Ms. Neha Sinha, Head Policy & Communications, WWF-India, led the advocacy workshop, with a team of resource persons including Jojo T.D., Project Manager, ATREE-CERC, Tiju C. Thomas, Associate Coordinator (Communities), WWF-India, and Sreerag Kuruvat, Senior Operations Manager, Green Worms Waste Management, Kozhikkode. The beach clean-up was held on the 18th evening at Alappuzha Beach, where the participants collected waste from the beach and handed it over to the Alappuzha Municipality for proper disposal. An exposure visit held on the morning of the 19th across the Vembanad Lake helped the youth to better understand the gravity of plastic pollution that has affected the largest Ramsar Site in the country, i.e., Vembanad-Kol wetland. WWF-India Volunteer Murukan Pareparambil and the staff of ATREE-CERC helped in conducting the program smoothly.



Waterbird Monitoring Program in Ramsar Sites

Dr. Nirmal George and Govind Girija conducted the monthly Waterbird Monitoring Program at Ashtamudi Lake, on 24th March 2024. They conducted the count at Asramam Mangroves and nearby locations and reported 39 species. They reported three nests of Grey Heron and many migratory species like Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Whiskered Tern, Rosy Starlings etc.



Reji Chandran and Navaneeth Sini George conducted the monthly Waterbird Monitoring Program at Ashtamudi Lake, on 30th April 2024 and reported 30 species with 496 individuals. They reported one migratory species, Common Sandpiper and other common species like White-cheeked Barbet, Grey Herons, Little Cormorants etc. They also reported 200+ Black Kites and 100+ Brahminy Kites.

Earth Hour 2024

Earth Hour 2024 was successfully conducted in Kerala. Official communication were sent out to all concerned starting right from the Governor and CM's Office to environmental NGOs across the State. A press meeting was convened at the Thiruvananthapuram Press Club on 21st March. Social media content was developed and posted on all handles.



Cylothn was conducted in Thiruvananthapuram jointly with Decathlon, the national partners, other cycling clubs in Thiruvananthapuram, namely, Indus Cycling Embassy (ICE), Cyclo Trivians and NDD Bikers. The Chief Guest, Brigadier Ananth Kumar, Group Commander, NCC Group Headquarters Trivandrum, ceremoniously flagged off the Cyclothon. In Kochi, the Cyclothon was carried out in association with ICE-Sheroes and T D School Mattancherry Bicycle Brigade.

WWF-India volunteers interacted with the public through some "minute-to-win-it" games while spreading the message of Earth Hour and giving away LED bulbs to symbolize energy conservation. This drew the attention of a lot of visitors, and they wholeheartedly participated in the Switch-Off and Candle Light Vigil held at the Thiruvananthapuram Museum and Zoo Compound. A musical event was also organized as part of the event, where Mr. Kunjumon and his team performed instrumental music at the popular location, the Band Stand, within the Museum Compound.



Switch-Off at other locations: Various institutions/landmarks across Thiruvananthapuram expressed solidarity with WWF-India in the event, namely, Kerala Legislative Assembly, Kanakakkunnu Palace, UST Global, Infosys campus, etc.



Other events: Kannur Airport, SCMS College, Yeldo Mar Baselios College, and Marian Academy of Management Studies, Kothamangalam, took part in the Earth Hour Switch-Off and Candlelight Vigil. SCMS College also had a full-day program of screening “Our Planet: Our Business” and a presentation on “Carbon Footprint” by students. They conducted an online competition, where students were

asked to list out three ways in which they could “Support Earth, Our Only Home.” Winners were given goodies from WWF-India’s Nature Shop.



Photo exhibition of Dragonflies and Birds

Thiruvananthapuram Manvilla Govt. LPS organized a photo exhibition under the auspices of WWF-India, Kerala State Office, as part of the anniversary celebration of the school. Subhash C.S., Principal, Atipra Govt. ITI inaugurated the photo exhibition. Headmistress Vidya V. presided over the function. WWF-India Volunteers Anuop S.S., Reji Chandran, Suraj S.R., Manoj. V., and Mohit M.G. led the exhibition. The annual celebration was organized in the name of Prakriti 2024. ITI Students, their parents, and the local general public came to see the exhibition.



Summer Camp for Students of St. Thomas Residential School, Thiruvananthapuram

St. Thomas Residential School authorities requested WWF-India, Kerala State Office to be the Knowledge Partner and take sessions for students who have registered for their Summer Camp. Accordingly, four sessions were arranged. On March 21, “Who is a Cool Conservationist and how to be one?” was taken by Renjan Mathew Varghese and Anushreedha S.S. On March 22 - “Feathered Friends” on birds, was taken by Anish Mohan Thampi and Ms. Vijayalekshmi P.V. On March 23 the session on “Butterflies & Odonates” was led by Dr. Sujith V. Gopalan, and the final session was on March 25 titled “Nature Interpretation Skill Development” and this was led by A.K. Sivakumar. The four sessions were attended by 54 students from the school.



Summer School at State Central Library

The State Public Library officials contacted WWF-India State send resource persons to take sessions on Global Warming, Climate Change, Carbon Footprint and Human-Wildlife Conflict for their Annual Summer Camp for school children. Accordingly, Mr. Sivakumar took a session on Climate Change and Carbon Footprint and Ms. Anushreedha took a

session on Human-Wildlife Conflict for the children on 22nd April at the Public Library. The children gave feedback at the event and thanked the WWF-India team.

ESSF and SoP Training at Coimbatore

The five-member KLSO Team attended the ESSF and SoP training program along with the WGNL staff at Coimbatore on 29-30th April 2024. The sessions were led by Ms. Priya Gupta from WWF-India, Secretariat. The two days workshop witnessed very active discussions and deliberations.



Meeting between KLSO and WGNL Team

The KLSO Team discussed possible collaborations with the WGNL Team. The WGNL team presented all their ongoing projects and programs, and KLSO explained their work – EE and projects. The WGNL Team wants to extend its work in Kerala in the future since the whole of Kerala landscape falls in the Western Ghats. Kerala State Office will, in the future, help WGNL coordinate with the various line departments connected to our work like Kerala Forests and Wildlife Department, Kerala State Biodiversity Board, Customs in regard to illegal wildlife trade, etc.



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*Published by WWF-India, Kerala State Office, Vanchiyoor P.O., Thiruvananthapuram - 695035
For private circulation only • Phone: 0471-2302265 • email: klso@wwfindia.net • web: wwfindia.org
Pre-Press: Soft and Soft, Sasthamangalam, Phone: 8547043499, Printed at: New Multi Offset, Tvpmm*