**FROM THE STATE DIRECTOR’S DESK**

Our initiatives towards protecting our feathered friends i.e. birds, in forests as well as in other habitats like wetlands, coasts, and even in cities, are going ahead full steam and thanks to our network of very active volunteers namely Hari, Jaichand, Neha, Govind, Sujith, Arun and others. The Sparrow Survey was one such activity that we carried out in the month of March covering some selected location and stretches in the Capital City. Even though their numbers have gone down and they have disappeared from some areas, they still thrive well in some areas. My experience of sparrow survey in the coastal stretch of Vallakkadavu – Sulaiman Street – Bheemapally – Poonthura with our volunteer and exporter birder Govind and my nine year old daughter Reeba was a real eye opener, where we could really witness in person how humans and sparrows co-exist without any conflicts. Sunday Bird Walk, the monthly regular birding, was conducted at Thenmala in Shendurney WLS and surrounding areas on 6th March with the participation of 13 birders. In these two months we have also been able to partner with other organisations in their various initiatives which shares our common vision. We were very much part of the Parsithithi Aikya Vedi in Kerala which takes an active role in checking that development goes in balance with nature and environment. Parsithithi Aikya Vedi has come out with a document of the major environmental degradation and violations of environmental laws, legislations and regulations in Kerala during the present Government’s last 3 years of ruling. This was publicly tabled and presented in a meeting convened on 14th March at YMCA, Thiruvananthapuram. Representing WWF, I attended the meeting and took part in the discussions and deliberations and also spoke out on WWF’s position on such issue and our various initiatives. We also took part in the detailed study in Kerala on Clean Cooking Solutions initiated by Energy Management Centre, Govt. of Kerala in partnership with the Global Alliance for Clean Cooking Solutions under the UN. We also participated in the 3 days International Conference on Aquatic Exotics organized by the Dept. of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, University of Kerala from 28 – 30 March 2016. I was a special invitee to the meeting and in the second day experience sharing session, we were given a slot to present WWF’s position on invasive alien species. The other major event for these two months was our regular Earth Hour, this year on the theme of ‘Go Solar’ mainly Rooftop Solar. This year also we had the support of Dept. of Environment and Climate Change (DoECC), Energy Management Centre (EMC), Kerala State Electricity Board Limited (KSEBL), and NIMS Heart Foundation and NI Group of Institutions with the partnership of Department of Museum & Zoos, Indus Cycling Embassy (ICE), Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP), and Junior Chamber International (JCI). This time, we had given much importance for publicity and outreach through letters, social media, stickers and mainline print and visual media. Our policy and advocacy level interventions included compiling and sending the wildlife trade and mortality reports to TRAFFIC-India, compiling a PowerPoint presentation titled ‘Our Wetland Ecosystems in Peril’ including the various proposed and ongoing development projects which has come up in the State mainly as initiatives of the various department of the Government itself which are ultimately wreaking havoc to the wetland ecosystems in the State, and we also participated in the meeting called by Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Thiruvananthapuram Chapter to address the issues related to NH development from Kazhakottam to Chackal, mainly tree felling, around 4300 numbers and also excavation of hillocks and construction of bridge over Veli-Akkulam estuarine complex, in which the Chief Secretary and District Collector was also present. We observed Earth Day 2016 in April with three activities, the digital promotion of Tree Conservation Campaign through Facebook, Senior Education Officer and the Volunteers Team conducting a State-level Quiz Competition for High School Students at Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and the Environment and the State Director delivering a talk on ‘Protection of Forests and Wildlife’ at the Pampa Parirakshana Samithi Summer Camp held at the FPS Office near Chengannur on 21st April. Following the Earth Day 2016 theme ‘Trees for Earth’, the volunteers and staff carried out a Tree Protection Campaign within the Museum & Zoo Compound placing hoardings with captions highlighting the need for planting and protecting trees, printed and mounted on cardboard, tied to the trees standing within the M&Z Compound with the ultimate aim of sensitizing the visitors.

**Renjan Mathew Varghese, State Director**

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**IMPORTANT NEWS ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE**

**GLOBAL**

**El Hierro Island vying for 100% clean energy**

Pines and pineapples vie for space on El Hierro, a tiny rugged Canary island that has gone all out to produce all its electricity from renewables, attracting global attention in the process. On February 15, this remote Spanish island nestled deep in the Atlantic off the coast of Africa managed just that—for the first time, its hydro-wind plant produced enough electricity for the 7,000 inhabitants for more than 24 hours. With its rugged coastline of great black volcanic cliffs, badland moonscapes and ancient forests, the island, which is slightly smaller than Malta, is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, an area designated to promote its biodiversity and sustainable use. (Source: http://phys.org/news/2016-04-el-hierro-spanish-island-vying.html, 20 April 2016)
Great Barrier Reef: 93% of reefs hit by coral bleaching

Almost 93% of reefs on the Great Barrier Reef have been hit by coral bleaching, according to a comprehensive survey revealing the full extent of the devastation caused by abnormally warm ocean temperatures sweeping the globe. There have only been three mass bleaching events recorded on the reef, and all of them have happened since 1998. Scientists say this episode is the worst they've ever seen. The world is in the midst of a global bleaching event, which is a result of a pulse of warm water flowing around the Pacific Ocean caused by El Niño, and the background global warming caused by man-made greenhouse gas emissions. (Source: The Hindu, 19 April 2016)

NATIONAL

Solar power sector to shine brightly in 2016: Mercom

Solar power sector in India is expected to double its annual capacity during 2016 supported by favourable policy framework and falling costs, according to a global renewable energy consulting firm. The sector will add over 4,000 MW this year from the earlier forecast of 3,600 MW, according to Mercom Capital. Mercom revised its forecast of capacity addition as various projects, which are under development, will be going on stream this year. Union Minister of Power and New and Renewable Energy Piyush Goyal had also indicated that 2016-17 would witness a significant rise in new capacity addition in solar power sector. (Source: The Hindu, 20 March 2016)

A ray of hope for nature enthusiasts

The banks of the Tungabhadra in Karnataka’s Sirguppa Taluk have provided a ray of hope for the revival of the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard (GIB). A group of nature enthusiasts and avid birdwatchers sighted three GIBs — two adults and a chick — in interior Sirguppa Taluk. The presence of the chick is evidence that the vast grasslands there are a breeding ground for the species that is on the verge of extinction. GIB was spotted here last in 2006. In the years preceding that, it was assumed that the GIB had been wiped out from Karnataka. This semi-arid and arid grasslands in the interiors of Sirguppa Taluk could potentially be a perfect habitat for the Bustard. (Source: The Hindu, 7 March 2016)

Ulsoor Lake turns into fish graveyard

Ulsoor Lake became a graveyard on 7th March morning. Thousands of fish were found dead, floating on the lake’s waters, all victims of the early summer heat and soaring temperature. As the day progressed, they were washed onto the lake’s shore. By evening, the smell of rotting fish pervaded the air as the civic body had not yet cleared the lake. BBMP officials said that it will be cleared completely by next day, and attributed the delay to 7th being a public holiday. Fish kill in the City’s lakes have almost become an annual phenomenon, during the onset of summer. “It is usually a direct result of reduced dissolved oxygen level in the water. While algae in the lake release oxygen into the water during daytime, it uses up dissolved oxygen during night time along with the fish creating a big drop in the dissolved oxygen levels. So most fish kills are observed in early mornings,” said a senior BBMP official. (Source: The Hindu, 8 March 2016)

Biologists question claims on wild Tiger population

Tiger Biologists are not fully convinced of the April 10 report of the World Wildlife Fund and the Global Tiger Forum that the world’s wild Tiger population is increasing and on track for doubling in a decade. “We do not find this report and its implications scientifically convincing,” said Tiger Biologists K. Ullas Karanth, Director, Science Asia, attached to the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS); Dale Miquelle, Director, WCS Russia Program; John Goodrich, Director, Panthera’s Tiger programme; and Arjun Gopalaswamy, Research Associate, Dept. of Zoology, University of Oxford; in a joint statement. India has invested massively in recovering Tiger populations over the last four decades. This has been made possible because of strong political, administrative and public support rarely matched anywhere else, the statement said. (Source: The Hindu, 7 March 2016)

STATE

Waste dumping poses threat to wildlife

Dumping of plastic and degradable wastes inside the Idukki Wildlife Sanctuary is posing threat to wild animals and polluting streams that flow through the forest. Huge quantity of waste generated in Cheruthoni, Painavu, Thadiampadu and Karimaban Town is dumped inside the forest. The Idukki Wildlife Sanctuary is home to Elephants, Sambars and Wild Dogs. Sources said that as many as 20 Sambar Deer had died after swallowing plastic. Post-mortem reports confirmed the presences of plastic in the intestine of these animals. Animals face acute shortage of fodder and water in the core areas and they come out in search of food especially during summer. They eat plastic bags with food wastes that are dumped in the forest. (Source: The Hindu, 19 April 2016)

Power use may touch 100 mu by 2018

Power consumption in Kerala breached all records on 27th April 2016 to touch 4,000 MW (80 million units), prompting experts to predict that the State may consume up to 100 million units a day in two years, given the soaring mercury level and pattern of electricity use. Daily peak demand that swayed between 60 and 65 million units last year has gone up by about 15 million units this year
and it is realistic to foresee the State requiring 100 million units during peak hours in two years, says a Government Official. Figures from the Kerala State Electricity Board show that the peak-load demand climbed to 4,004 MW (80.33 million units) on the day. “It is the first time that the 4,000-MW (80 million units) barrier is breached,” says an expert. (Source: The Hindu, 29 April 2016)

The wild ones reach Wayanad WLS

The seasonal migration of wild animals has begun from the adjacent Wildlife Sanctuaries in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu to the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WWS) in search of fodder and water. The Sanctuary is a haven for Elephants, Gaur, Antelopes, Bears, and numerous birds during summer, because of the easy availability of fodder and water. The Forest Department has made efforts to ensure fodder, water, and safety to the migrating wild guests. Apart from the coarse grasslands in the Sanctuary, two temporary earthen dams have been built inside the Sanctuary as a precaution against streams drying up during summer, Mr. Dhaneshkumar said. To provide fodder, the coarse grasslands in the Sanctuary have been trimmed to allow growth of soft grass. Invasive plants such as Senna spectabilis and Lantana have been cleared on 175 hectares of land to provide fodder, he said. The Sanctuary will be closed for tourists from March 1 to April 20 so as to ensure a trouble-free migration for the animals. (Source: The Hindu, 28 Feb 2016)

EXPERT TALK

SPECSIES OF THE ISSUE

Black Kite (Milvus migrans)

The wild ones reach Wayanad WLS

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ACTIVITIES OF WWF-INDIA
KERALA STATE OFFICE

Sparrow Survey as part of Sparrow Day 2016

Continuing from the previous year, WWF-India organized the House Sparrow Survey this year also on 18th & 20th of March covering certain selected stretches in and around Thiruvananthapuram as part of World Sparrow Day. The survey mainly covered eight sites - Palayam - Connemara Market, Chalai Market, Trivandrum Central Railway Station, Trivandrum Central KSRTC Bus Terminal, East Fort Bus Terminal, Valiyathura – Shanghumugham, Peroorokada Market, Coastal stretch of Vallakkadavu – Sulaiman Street – Bheemapally – Poonthura. The survey was conducted on both the days during the same time period from 6.30-8.30am. All the eight teams had a mix of both officials and volunteers of WWF-India who are regular participants of monthly Sunday Bird Walks, Kerala Bird Race, Asian Waterfowl Census, Heronry Count, Common Bird Monitoring Programme etc. The survey teams were led by

CHILDREN’S CORNER

Do your part

There are many environmental problems around you which is not addressed at local level. Can you try to identify a few? Not by many actions and agitation, but sensitizing public by a short campaign or action. We observed Earth Day 2016 on 22nd April with the theme ‘Trees for Earth’. We, especially Keralites experienced a hard time this year from February onwards with scorching heat and every one was searching for shade and breeze. Despite this, many are still running after felling trees on behalf of few unfortunate incidents associated with heavy rain and wind. Find the set of posters on Tree Conservation on our Facebook page and you are free to use them for tree conservation campaigns. That will be your part to reduce the warming next summer.

https://www.facebook.com/WWFKerala/photos/?tab=album&album_id=965815496872777

Assessment of the environmental degradation in Kerala over the last 5 years

WWF is part of the Parsithithi Aikya Vedi in Kerala which takes an active role in checking that development goes in balance with nature and environment. Paristhithi Aikya Vedi has come out with a document of the major environmental degradation and violations of environmental laws, legislations and regulations in Kerala during the present Government’s rule. This was publicly tabled and presented in a meeting convened on 14th March at YMCA, Thiruvananthapuram. The State Director attended the meeting and took part in the discussions and deliberations and also spoke out on WWF’s position on such issues and our various conservation initiatives.

Sunday Bird Walk

Sunday Bird Walk, the monthly regular birding was conducted at Thenmala in Shendurney WLS and surrounding areas on 6th March with the participation of 13 birders. The team was led by Sri. Jaichand Johnson and the participants spotted around 30 species of birds from the area including endemic Malabar Trogon, Malabar Grey Hornbill etc.
Earth Hour 2016 was observed with the support of Department of Environment and Climate Change (DoECC), Govt. of Kerala, Energy Management Centre (EMC), Govt. of Kerala, Kerala State Electricity Board Limited (KSEBL), Govt. of Kerala and NIMS Heart Foundation and NI Group of Institutions with the partnership of Department of Museum & Zoos, Govt. of Kerala, Indus Cycling Embassy (ICE), Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP), and Junior Chamber International (JCI). This time, we had given much importance for publicity and outreach through letters, Social media, Stickers and Media. Earth Hour 2016 was organized on the theme of ‘Go Solar’ mainly Rooftop Solar. Many promotional initiatives like hoardings, stickers, public campaigns, door to door campaigns, press meet etc. were organised.

In order to reach out to the students and youth of the two major satellite towns of Thiruvananthapuram i.e. Neyyattinkara and Nedumangad, we tied up with GEMS Magic Academy run by Magician Indra Ajith to conduct magic show on the theme of energy conservation. The Cyclathon under the initiative of Indus Cycling Embassy with 35 cyclists and the Walkathon with the early morning walkers at Museum and Zoo premises were another promo event.

For the Earth Hour evening major function, the Radio Stand in the Museum & Zoo Compound was selected as the venue. All our staff, their families and volunteers got together at the venue and the first step was to arrange, pour oil, put wick and start lighting “Manchirathu/ Idinjil” in and around the area to make the premises more beautiful as per the occasion and to attract the public to the venue. Tholpava Koothu, a traditional art form performed using oil lamps started by around 7pm which attracted the public to the venue. Dr. Biju Prabhakar IAS, Thiruvananthapuram District Collector, Mr. Dhareshan Unnithan, Director, Energy Management Centre, Mr.K.Gangadharan, Director, Museum and Zoos were the guests for the event. The guests addressed the gathering and called for conserving energy for a sustainable tomorrow. By 8.30pm, the lights towards the Radio Stand were switched off and the District Collector lighted the EH 2016 main candle and switched on the 60+ Earth Hour logo fabricated using LED strip. From the EH 2016 main candle, the guests moved to lighting the candles arranged on the ground in cups in the form of 60+ the Earth Hour logo and the guests were joined by the general public. The volunteers distributed individual candles and cups to all the people around and everyone joined in the candle light vigil. People, as individuals, as teams of friends and colleagues, as families enjoyed the candle light vigil by taking selfies and photographs with the guests. The major landmarks switched off were Raj Bhavan and Museum & Zoo Compound. EH 2016 was observed independently by few apartment complexes and Residents Associations also. The Ambrosia chain of bakeries promoted Earth Hour by providing our stickers along with their bills and also observed Earth Hour on 19th evening with candle light dinner. The Chair for Gandhian Studies and Research, University of Calicut distributed leaflets to observe Earth Hour within their network. Similarly, many such institutions, associations, households and individuals have joined in Earth Hour 2016 to make it a real success and a people’s movement

Multimedia Presentation on Wetlands

WWF-India Kerala State Office has compiled a PowerPoint presentation titled ‘Our Wetland Ecosystems in Peril’ including the various proposed and ongoing development projects which has come up in the State mainly as initiatives of the various departments of the Government itself which are ultimately wreaking havoc to the wetland ecosystems in the State. Around 20 case studies are included in the presentation. This has been shared with Thanal for wider publicity to make the people more aware on the consequences of such actions and to ensure that local resistance comes up against wetland reclamation and conversion of any kind, and these natural habitats are protected for our food and water security.

Marine Turtle Conservation in Kerala

The Kerala State Office jointly with the Marine Programme of WWF-India has started a project in Kerala titled ‘Marine Turtle Conservation in Kerala’. One of the objectives of the project is to support, strengthen and build the capacity of the local conservation groups involved in Turtle protection
activities along the Kerala State. Field visits were carried out to Thrissur and Chavakkad on 13th April and Thottapally in Alappuzha on 27th April to meet with the local groups to understand their work, assess the needs and to chart the way forward.

Earth Day 2016

Earth Day was observed with three activities by the State Office. One was the digital promotion of Tree Conservation Campaign through Facebook. This year’s theme for Earth Day is ‘Trees for Earth’. Eight hoardings with attractive captions highlighting the need for ‘Planting and Protecting Trees’ were posted in the State Office FB Page and was shared with our volunteers and network members through our yahoo and google mailing groups also.

Senior Education Officer and the Volunteers Team conducted a State-level Quiz Competition for High School Students at Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and the Environment.

The State Director delivered a talk on ‘Protection of Forests and Wildlife’ at the Pampa Parirakshana Samithi Summer Camp held at the PPS Office near Chengannur on 21st April.

Tree Conservation Campaign

Following the Earth Day theme ‘Trees for Earth’, the volunteers and staff carried out a Tree Conservation Campaign within the Museum & Zoo Compound on 28th and 29th of April. The hoardings with the captions highlighting the need for planting and protecting trees, printed and mounted on cardboard, were tied to the trees standing within the M&Z Compound with the ultimate aim of sensitizing the visitors. Museum & Zoo Compound is a place where thousands of people from all walks of life come in for morning and evening walks. Since school summer vacation is going on, there are lots of visitors also from across the State.

Later on, on 3rd June, 31 student participants of the Summer Vacation Camp joined us in this campaign and they also contributed in the effort to erect 25 hoardings. Totally 52 hoardings have been erected on trees within the Museum and Zoo Compound.

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Project implemented by WWF-India • Supported by Johnson Lifts and Escalators, Chennai • Local Coordination