

FROM CAMPUS TO WILDERNESSES :

Celebrating World Heritage Day 2024

-Anuranjan Roy

Every year, April 18th marks a celebration of the cultural and natural heritage identified by UNESCO as belonging “to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located”. On the occasion of World Heritage Day in 2024, the WII campus, schools, museums and Natural/Mixed World Heritage Sites across India were connected by this very special bond. Wildlife Institute of India – Category 2 Centre (WII-C2C) utilised the occasion to bring together all the above groups over a common interest in natural heritage, as much a part of our identity as cultural heritage.

Beginning on campus, WII-C2C organised “Connections: A Natural Heritage Quiz” which encouraged various team representatives within WII to think laterally, piecing together clue-filled questions to reveal interesting answers. The occasion also offered the attendees a window into the links between heritage sites and biodiversity conventions in a talk by Dr. Nehru Prabakaran followed by a discussion on the value of natural heritage by Dr. R Suresh Kumar. Simultaneously, in collaboration with the extensive school network of National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), World Heritage Day was being observed by schools across the nation through a natural heritage pledge, informational material and heritage documentaries provided by WII-C2C.



Art Contest participation in progress at Sawai Madhopur



As a custodian of India's rich natural and cultural heritage, I pledge to:

- **Cherish** the wisdom of our ancestors, who revered the land and its creatures.

- **Safeguard** the myriad ecosystems that bestow us with clean air, pure water, and the joys of wilderness.

- **Celebrate** the splendor of our wildlife, the guardians of our forests and rivers.

- **Embrace** a lifestyle that reflects the sustainable practices rooted in our heritage.

- **Advocate** for the harmony of nature and culture, ensuring both are preserved for posterity.

- **Inspire** my community to value our environmental riches as much as our cultural gems.

This I vow, for the well-being of our planet and the pride of our nation.



The World Heritage Day 2024 Pledge

To a broad section of society, museums serve a critical role in shaping minds, young and old, acting as an interface for knowledge. The Regional Museums of Natural History (RMNHs) in Sawai Madhopur, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar and Mysuru boosted World Heritage Day 2024 celebrations by hosting talks, discussions and documentary screenings to more than 2000 visitors on that particular day and through the week after. This was a role that was ably essayed by another group of learning sites, in which nature's bounty provides its own lessons. The managers of the World Heritage Sites of Great Himalayan National Park, Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Park, Khangchendzonga National Park, Kaziranga National Park, Sundarbans National Park and Kudremukh National Park (Western Ghats) stepped up to reach out to tourists, school children and local communities on the occasion of World Heritage Day, helping them realise the special value that such places hold.

Taking the message of natural heritage to an even larger space, that of a young mind's imagination, WII-C2C with the extensive support of NMNH also organised an India-wide Art Contest on the theme “Saving India's Natural Heritage”.

The response was incredible as even in this age of digital communication, schools from Arunachal Pradesh to Goa and from Kashmir to Kanyakumari organised painting sessions to let students express themselves in colours on paper. The entries that came into the NMNH office in New Delhi via post spoke volumes of the creative talent in our school students and of their innate connection with nature. As demonstrated perfectly by the 1st Prize winning entry seen overleaf, a watercolour by Ms. Nayonika Jena, a Class 12 student from Bhubaneswar, natural heritage conservation requires the unification between the cultural, natural and intangible domains. This underlying thought was also in evidence in the many ways that World Heritage Day 2024 was celebrated across campuses, wildernesses and minds.



The World Heritage Students taking the 'World Heritage Day 2024 Pledge' in Goa

About the Author:

Anuranjan Roy is a World Heritage Assistant at the WII-Category 2 Centre. He has visited and studied 38 World Heritage Sites spread across 5 countries. He co-edited "Wild Treasures", an anthology published by WII-C2C which spans 200 years of writing about 16 natural World Heritage Sites across the Asia Pacific.



First Prize Winner in World Heritage Day Art Contest (by Ms. Nayonika Jena)



Latitude: 30.623969
Longitude: 79.560306
Elevation: 1813.2±5 m
Accuracy: 11.0 m
Image: 16-04-2024 10:14

Celebration of World Heritage Day with local community at Valley of Flowers National