

'Nature and wildlife deserve our protection and conservation'

Mantha Surabhi

By understanding the value of nature, our children will be inspired to help preserve it for future generations and learn to coexist with all living things. Nature and wildlife possess an incredible beauty that deserves our protection and conservation," says **Sanjeev Venkataraman**, a short filmmaker and composer. His award-winning short film, *Lost In Harmony*, is being screened in Chennai today, on World Environment Day.

The short revolves around a man lost in the wild, and the crux of the plot chronicles the journey of the man as he encounters a wild elephant in the forest and gets separated from his friends. He explains, "This is a silent musical short, where emotions are expressed through silence and music in the setting of nature. It's experimental because I composed the music first, then worked backwards and finalised the concept

for the story. So, as a musician, I used music to inspire the story and themes that I connect with."

Sanjeev, a violinist who learned music under the tutelage of violin virtuoso A Kanyakumari, says, "Music has the power to evoke emotions in the audience and enhance the impact of

visual elements."

The final message of the film is JRR Tolkien's quote from *The Lord Of The Rings*: "Not all those who wander are lost." Sanjeev continues, "I have been an accompanying violinist in the Carnatic music scene for the past 30 years. Orchestral music has always inspired me since childhood. The composers



who inspire me the most are John Williams, Jerry Goldsmith, James Horner, Hans Zimmer, Bach, Beethoven and Claude Debussy. My guru is my main inspiration to compose instrumental music. I have composed many raga-based orchestral pieces that are used in my film."

The team, along with Navaneeth Krishnan, a wildlife advisor, travelled for 15 days in the green belts

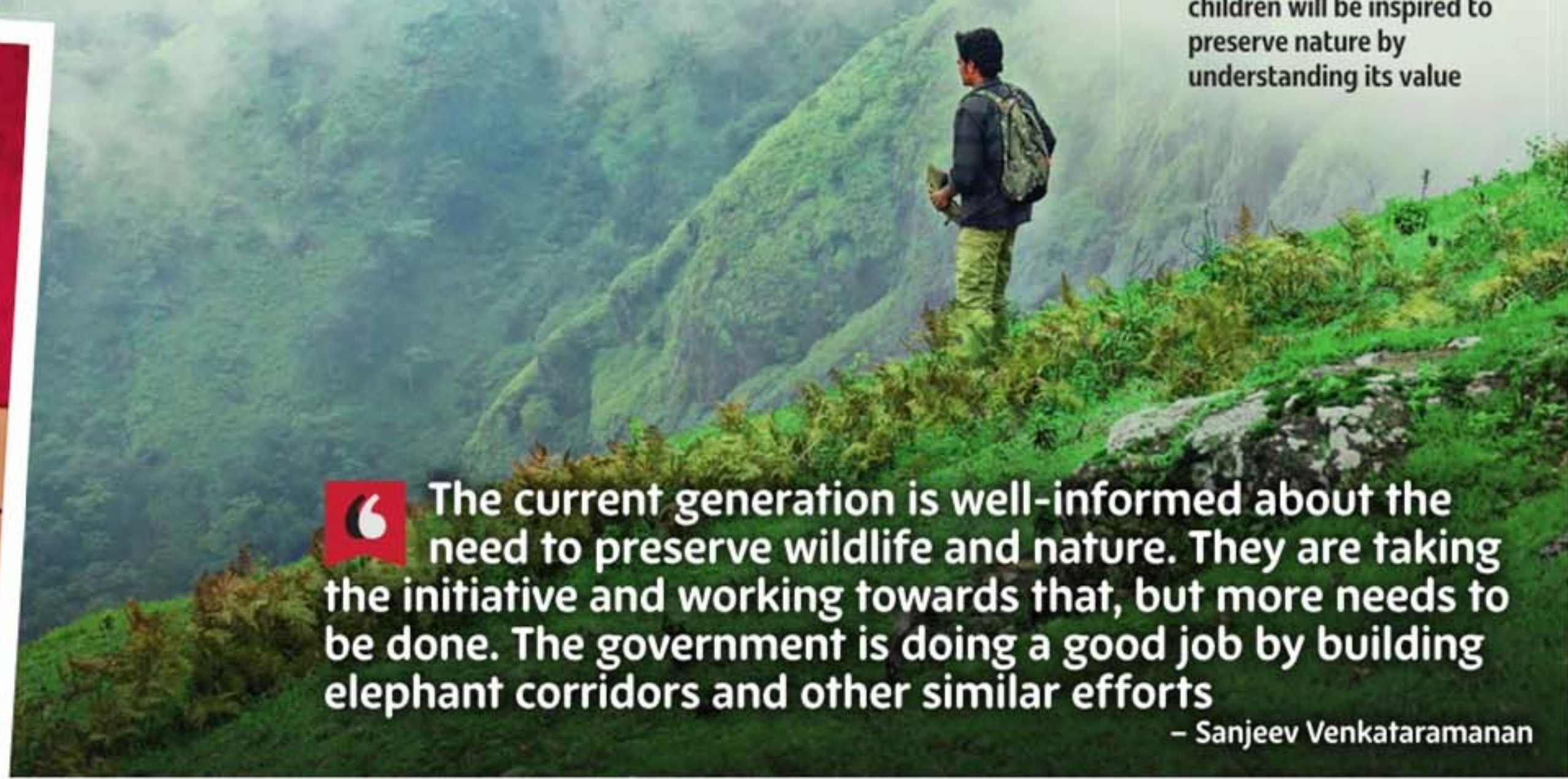
spread across the South and shot in places like Thekkady, Dandeli, Kumily, Bandipur, Mudumalai and more.

Sanjeev hopes that everyone is closely associated with nature in some form or the other. "Be aware of what nature provides and its role in our existence and add one's efforts towards preserving something so precious from mankind's sadistic pleasures," he concludes.

Through his short film, Sanjeev (left) conveys that children will be inspired to preserve nature by understanding its value

The current generation is well-informed about the need to preserve wildlife and nature. They are taking the initiative and working towards that, but more needs to be done. The government is doing a good job by building elephant corridors and other similar efforts

— Sanjeev Venkataramanan



3,500-year-old rock art of wild sheep and double-humped camels revealed in Kazakhstan

About 100 petroglyphs, dating back around 3,500 years, have been discovered in Kazakhstan, several news reports say. However, a scholar said that this discovery is not entirely new, as it had been kept a secret to protect the site until it could be examined more closely.

Petroglyphs are engravings created by chipping away at a rock face. The petroglyphs that are reportedly new were discovered in the Zhambyl (also spelled Jambyl) region, located in southeastern Kazakhstan. They date back to the Bronze or Early Iron ages. Exactly how long the Bronze and early Iron ages lasted in Kazakhstan is a topic of debate among scholars, but together they likely date to between 4,000 and 2,500 years ago. The petroglyphs were found during a nationwide volunteer campaign that aims to clean the environment. After the potential discovery was made, local archaeologists were brought in to examine the petroglyphs.

The petroglyphs show animals and people, with examples including double-humped camels, argali (a type



of wild sheep) and depictions of people hunting. The petroglyphs are spread across an area that is 66 feet to 82 feet (20 to 25 meters) long and 5 feet to 6.6 feet (1.5 to 2 m) in width, Sauran Kaliyev, an archaeologist who examined the petroglyphs. However, the site is "not at all new" and is well known among specialists, Viktor Novozhenov, an archaeologist with the Saryarka Archaeological Institute at Karaganda State University in Kazakhstan.

Novozhenov, who was not involved with the volunteer project, noted that the site has not been studied in detail and

that its petroglyphs have not yet been described in a peer-reviewed journal. When scholars find a rock art site in Kazakhstan, they sometimes prefer to keep its location a secret until it can be properly recorded and published, said Novozhenov, noting that destruction of such rock art sites by vandals or other individuals is sometimes a problem.

Novozhenov said that more funding and resources are needed to properly record these rock art sites. "We don't have enough experts and funds for needed analyses and [fieldwork]," he said.

730 Lion-tailed Macaque in Sharavathi Valley LTM Sanctuary: Report

The report has also called for initiatives and interventions which are required to manage the LTM and its habitat in the sanctuary

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A report on the status of diurnal arboreal mammals in and around the forest of Sharavathi Valley Lion-tailed Macaque (LTM) Sanctuary which has been submitted to the Karnataka Forest Department recently has revealed that there are 730 LTM in vicinity.

“The LTMs are being a habitat specialist confined to a narrow range of evergreen forests along the slopes and adjoining forests in the study site. The estimated number of groups was 41 and the estimated minimum population size was 730 for the entire Sharavathi Valley LTM Sanctuary and its adjoining LTM habitat,” states the report.

Anthropogenic activities

The report conducted by Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, Coimbatore and



Lion-tailed macaque at Someshwara Wildlife Sanctuary and (right) in Kudremukh National Park.

the Karnataka Forest Department states many anthropogenic activities have been a major concern in the area.

“In addition to hunting, loss of habitat due to the expansion of agricultural fields, developmental activities and the extraction of firewood

have drastically affected habitat availability,” states the report.

The report has also called for initiatives and interventions which are required to manage the LTM and its habitat in the sanctuary.

They include population monitoring of

the LTM and its habitat, restoring connectivity between forest patches for LTM, restoration of the degraded habitat or the forest land after removal of the acacia plantation, joint management as a platform for sustainable extraction, processing and marketing of Uppage



(*Garcinia gummi-gutta*) and insulating the power line to avoid animal death due to electrocution.

Hydroxy citric acid

“Uppage is the most widely extracted Non-Timber Forest Products in recent years due to continual demand from pharmaceutical industries. This is due to the discovery of Hydroxy citric acid in Uppage as a treatment for obesity control. Many faunal species are dependent on Uppage for food which includes monkeys, civets and squirrels. Early harvests affect the feeding ecology of these animals. If the fruits of Uppage are

harvested as a ripe fruit or collected from natural fall will have lesser competition between dependent fauna and people,” it stated

It added that LTMs generally traverse under higher canopies, but due to habitat degradation, they are occasionally forced to seek alternatives.

“Electric wires connected to road networks appear to be an easy path, but they are charred to death when they approach these current lines. To overcome this, it is advised that all the existing power lines along the sanctuary or the entire LTM habitat have to be insulated,” it added.

Act now to save our planet

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The United Nations (UN) every year, since 1974, observes June 5 as the World Environment Day to make people aware of the importance of conserving nature. The 2024 edition of World Environment Day focusses on land restoration, desertification, and drought resilience, under the slogan ‘Our Land’.

Deforestation, increasing use of plastic, wastage of water resources, rise in industrialisation and a host of other factors have taken a toll on the environment and wildlife. Hence, it is the need of the hour to restore our ecosystem. According to environmentalists, this is only possible when people across the world join hands to conserve nature and reduce their carbon footprint.

“We cannot wait for 2050 to achieve the net zero carbon emission target; we need to make peace with the planet now. Mitigation and adaptation are not the only solutions

It's time to restore the damaged ecosystem and make this planet a better place to live in



infrastructural development is necessary for the nation's progress, it is also important to save and plant more trees. Besides providing food and oxygen, trees help in checking soil erosion, preventing flooding, and protecting wildlife amongst other benefits. It's imperative to preserve forests, woodlands, and green zones in urban

areas as it helps to slow down global warming.

“The loss of green cover doesn't mean fewer trees—it implies more soil erosion, greater vulnerability to flooding, higher temperatures, lesser rainfall, and a complete loss of codependent ecosystems. Community-led plantations can go a long way in contributing

towards not only increasing green cover, but also restoring peri-urban ecosystems. Having said that, plantation drives are increasingly becoming instruments of greenwashing. Hence, while participating in a plantation drive, one must ensure that the saplings are native to the area. We must nurture them for a couple of months until they are able to survive on their own,” states Abhiir Bhalla, youth environmentalist and sustainability consultant.

PRESERVE WILDLIFE HABITAT: Protecting wildlife habitat is another important step in restoring the ecosystem. According to environmentalists, the loss of habitat is the biggest threat to wildlife. The world has already faced the extinction of one million species. And hence, it's critical to



take steps in the direction that would create an environment where plants and animals can thrive.

REDUCE, RECYCLE, AND REUSE WASTE: The volume of waste, especially plastic, generated by the

increasing urban population is adversely affecting the environment and raising health concerns. The most effective way to manage non-biodegradable waste is by reducing, recycling, and reusing it. One can contribute in this regard by replacing plastic bags with cloth bags, using eco-friendly plates and cups, recycling plastic bottles and choosing digital ways to save paper.

Dharmesh Basu, nature lover, shares, “Believing that the change should begin from home, I created a compost pit to make a better use of the wet waste that my household generates. However, the next question was how to cope

with the non-biodegradable waste. We had a few unused plastic bottles, and so instead of throwing it away, I started growing plants in it and hung them on the window grill. While generating less waste is a key solution, it is equally imperative to dispose waste in a more environmentally-friendly manner.”

Many experts rightly point out that although India is steadily moving towards becoming a superpower, unless we carefully manage land, water and natural resources, this dream will not become a reality.

(With inputs from Himanshi Duseja)



WHILE GENERATING LESS WASTE IS A KEY SOLUTION, IT IS EQUALLY IMPERATIVE TO DISPOSE WASTE IN A MORE ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY MANNER

anymore—we need to accelerate the natural processes, and boost innovative thinking that can restore the world's ecosystems. The focus should be on conservation of what's left of our planet. Prevention of further degradation is vital now,” informs Elsie Gabriel, environmentalist. She further adds, “Restoration could also remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. This could bring down the cost of investments in mitigation. The government is doing its part, but communities and individuals as well should contribute towards forests, mangroves, farmlands, cities, wetlands, and marine biodiversity restoration.”

The process of ecosystem restoration will help in controlling erosion, improving water quality, protecting habitat, and providing other benefits to people and environment. Here are some important ways of restoring the ecosystem.

PLANT MORE TREES: The importance of trees and how it's immensely beneficial to the environment is known to all. While industrialisation and

Cheetah cub found dead near mother Gamini in Kuno

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This is 10th cheetah death since Cheetah reintroduction project

One of the cubs of female Cheetah “Gamini” was found dead in Kuno National Park on Tuesday evening.

It was lying dead close to the mother. It was around 4 pm that veterinary team spotted one of the cubs lying still close to the mother while five cubs were playing around.

When veterinary team reached near the cub, it was found lifeless. Cause of death could be known only after the post mortem.

Kuno officials said that rest 13 cubs born on Indian soil and 13 adult cheetahs are doing good. It was in March that Gamini gave birth to six cubs.

This summer season,

temperatures have broken all the old records and spell of extreme heat lasted for a longer period. It is being fathomed that Cheetah cub could have died due to heat stroke or due to extreme heat related illness.

This year, this is probably the first cheetah cub death reported in the

Kuno. Last year i.e year 2023, out of twenty adult cheetah's, six have perished in Kuno.

In January month of this month, Cheetah Shaurya had perished due to infection. In this way, total seven adult cheetahs have died since the Cheetah project has been introduced in Kuno.

Apart from this, three of the four cubs died due to extreme heat in March 2023.

The total casualty of cheetahs so far stands at ten including four cubs. Total twenty adult cheetahs were brought from South Africa and Namibia as part of reintroduction of Cheetahs in Kuno.

A senior officer of Kuno said that heat is unbearable in Kuno. The heat wave is sweeping Kuno and night temperature is swelling to 35 degrees Celsius.

Kuno officers tried to infuse coolness by sprinkling water in air and trying to review the nullahs by lifting water from Kuno river so that Cheetahs could have some comfortable atmosphere.

Deforestation and urbanization: A cause of human-elephant conflict

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, June 4: Guwahati is grappling with a growing crisis as wild elephants are increasingly invading residential and commercial areas, particularly in the Narengi camp area. The persistent incursions have caused significant property damage and pose a serious threat to human safety.

Business owners and residents are bearing the brunt of these invasions. One local shopkeeper lamented, "We've had to shut down our shops multiple times in the past month. The elephants come in the evening, and we have to close early to avoid any mishaps." This disruption has led to financial losses and heightened fear among the community.

Residents report a surge in human-elephant conflicts. "The problem is increasing, and the elephants are coming closer to our homes," one resident noted. Pedestrians, too, expressed their safety concerns. "Walking on the roads is risky. We can't predict when the elephants will appear," said a distressed pedestrian.

The primary cause of these elephant incursions is deforestation, according to a senior officer. "The sighting of elephants in this area is common and frequent. The cause of this problem can be said to be deforestation as the elephants come here in search of food that they earlier found within the forest area, which has now disappeared," he explained. He also mentioned previous discussions with the forest department about addressing the issue.

Another resident described the situation as tragic for the elephants. "The elephants have lost their homes as people have been building their homes in that area," she said.

The data from Global Forest Watch details the severity of deforestation in the region. From 2001 to 2023, Kamrup Metropolitan district in Assam lost 1.25 thousand hectares of tree cover, a 100% decrease since 2000. This deforestation has contributed to 0.39% of the global total loss and resulted in the emission of 523 kilotons of CO₂ equivalents. Fires have been a sig-

nificant driver of this tree cover loss, accounting for a loss of 19 hectares from 2001 to 2023. The year 2010 saw the highest loss due to fires, with 3 hectares lost, representing 5.4% of the tree cover loss for that year. From May 17, 2021, to May 13, 2024, there were 256 VIIRS fire alerts in Kamrup (Metro).

The northeastern region of India has witnessed 75% of the country's total tree cover loss from 2001 to 2023, as reported by Global Forest Watch. Guwahati has also seen a significant increase in deforestation alerts, with 299 reported between May 6 and May 13, 2024. These alerts, covering 3 hectares, highlight the growing threat to the city's green cover and ecosystem.

Despite the high number of alerts, the lack of high confidence alerts raises questions about the accuracy and effectiveness of current monitoring mechanisms. The escalating human-elephant conflict in Guwahati calls for urgent measures to address deforestation and enhance wildlife management strategies.

Dog squads to be deployed at tiger reserves in 7 states

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Nagpur: To curb poaching, illicit trade of animals, and detect contraband, 12 new wildlife sniffer dog squads will be deployed in nine tiger reserves in seven states across the country.

The canines have completed training at the Basic Training Centre, Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force (BTC-ITBP) camp in Panchkula, Haryana.

The dog squads will now join the forest departments of Uttarakhand (4), Odisha (2), Chhattisgarh (2), Jharkhand (1), Madhya Pradesh (1), Maharashtra (1), and West Bengal (1). The canines will be deployed at tiger reserves in Similipal (Odisha), Palamu (Jharkhand), Pench (Maharashtra), Kanha (Madhya Pradesh), Buxa (West Ben-

gal), Gomardha and Kalagarh (Chhattisgarh) and Corbett & Rajaji (Uttarakhand).

Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce (TRAFFIC) and WWF-India's wildlife sniffer dog training programme was launched in 2008 with just two dogs. With the latest squad, the number of wildlife sniffer dogs trained under the programme has increased to 106.

"It is a proud moment for us as we complete training over 100 wildlife sniffer dogs in India", said Dr Dipankar Ghose, Senior Director, Biodiversity Conservation, WWF-India, and Interim-Head, TRAFFIC's India office, in a statement released by WWF.

Inspector General (BTC-ITBP) also congratulated TRAFFIC and WWF-India on crossing an important milestone.

Drones pose big threat to flamingos, say green activists

Navi Mumbai: Drones are posing threat to safety of flamingos across Navi Mumbai wetlands, environmentalists have complained to chief minister Eknath Shinde, reports **B B Nayak**. Bird enthusiasts visiting the wetlands to watch the pink birds have been flying drones over the birds. At times, drones are flown just one or two feet above the birds, environmentalists have alleged.

NGO NatConnect Foundation has written to the CM and police, citing the danger to flamingos. The sharp, whirring propeller blades badly hurt and even kill the fragile birds included under Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, environmentalists said.

What is dangerous for the birds is that the drones try to track the birds even during their flight, said Nat-

The sharp, whirring propeller blades badly hurt and even kill the fragile birds included under Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, say environmentalists

Connect director B N Kumar, who called for official intervention to keep drones away from flamingo zones.

Rekha Sankhala of Save Flamingos & Mangroves Forum said, "I have come across the disturbing scenes at TS Chanakya flamingo zone."

Young bird enthusiasts operating drones may not be aware that the drones pose danger to the birds that these people love, Sankhala said and called for the need to educating them. "If a commoner like me tries to stop these youngsters, there is the risk of these people revolting and turning violent," she said and suggested that uniformed police personnel impose the law.

Birder Jyoti Nadkarni said unsafe drone culture is often seen at major flamingo zones and it must be checked.

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In an urban setting, people often gravitate towards indoor air-conditioned spots to beat the heat. Yet, there's nothing quite like visiting the natural green areas in the city for some rejuvenation. Let's take a tour of

some of them.

GREEN OASIS

Bhimashankar, a revered pilgrimage site, located about 213 kilometres away from Mumbai, is surrounded by dense forests and waterfalls. It provides a refreshing retreat from the hustle and bustle of city life. Visitors can trek through rugged ter-

rain, enjoy diverse flora and fauna, and pay homage to the ancient temple here.

Matheran, a quaint hill station located amidst the Western Ghats, is another spot to visit. Situated approximately 80 kilometres away from Mumbai, it is famous for its viewpoints and the toy train that plies here.

Green zones of interest

If you're yearning for some respite from the heat take a stroll to these parks, hills, and lakes for a refreshing encounter with nature



ALL PHOTOS ARE FOR REPRESENTATION PURPOSE ONLY

Rahul Jha, an advocate, says about it, "The cool breeze, chirping birds, and beautiful landscapes offer a much-needed respite from the heat and pollution. While here, you can take a stroll along lush pathways, explore forests, partake in horse riding, and revel in panoramic views."

Besides these, there's also Lonavala and Khandala, that are renowned for their scenic beauty and pleasant climate.

IN THE LAP OF NATURE

Yeoor Hills in Thane is an ideal spot for fresh air and greenery. Here's where you

can explore dense forests, nature trails, and catch glimpses of wildlife. You can also go trekking, cycling, and bird-watching and plan a picnic here.

Just as these hills offer a natural retreat, Aarey Milk Colony too, with its expanse of greenery, promises an enriching experience. On your visit here, take a stroll amidst lush meadows, picnic by the lakeside, or engage in activities like cycling, and yoga. Priya Palresha, a customer service executive, describes this place as an oasis amidst Mumbai's concrete jun-

gle. She says, "The sound of chirping birds helps me forget my worries and enjoy the serenity of nature."

RECREATIONAL POINTS

If you wish to embrace the greenery within your neighbourhood, opt for a visit to a nearby park. The Pramod Mahajan Van Udyan in Powai, a miniature jungle adjacent to the Powai Lake, is one such garden to visit. Pooja Anand, a technical writer, says, "I frequent this place to spot birds and butterflies or simply relax. The ambience is ideal for

leisurely walks and photography." Also spend time at Powai Lake and take in a boat ride. Similarly, Chhota Kashmir in Goregaon, with its lake and blooming flowers, is a mini paradise.

If you live in and around Matunga, make your way to Five Gardens, where you will be surrounded by colourful flowers, and lush lawns and pathways. Likewise, take a stroll, jog or practise yoga at Priyadarshini Park at Nepean Sea Road.

Escape the scorching summer heat and reconnect with nature at these green spaces in the city.

Oscar-fame clinic to rescue centres, a scramble to save birds in record heat

Unable to cope with rising heat, dehydrated avians are falling out of the sky. But some Bird Samaritans are doing their bit

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Wildlife Rescue — a bird clinic founded by brothers Mohd Saud and Nadeem Shehzaad, who featured in the Oscar-nominated documentary 'All That Breathes' — has had a busy couple of months as the capital's record-breaking heat wave is affecting not just humans, but also birds.

Saud points to a heat-stressed baby cheel brought in by a neighbourhood kid. "You can tell how weak he is by looking at the eyes. The mouth, either too dry or with thick saliva, also tells us how dehydrated he is. I fed him water and then gave him a drip intravenously," he says, moving aside the

JC KHANNA, VETERINARY DOCTOR IN MUMBAI

It doesn't help that Mumbai is a concrete jungle and doesn't have enough trees. So, birds keep on flying and get heat exhaustion

feathers to reveal a translucent skin bulge reducing bit by bit as the drip got absorbed.

Co-founder Shehzaad says they have seen a 50% rise in birds coming into their clinic in Wazirabad during May and June over the last three years. "Usually, we treat 800 birds in two months but in the summer of 2022, this went up to 1,200 in the same time span. This year, we got 86 new cases in one day in May which was a record," he adds. They are currently caring for more than 250 birds, including a trio of ailing parakeets, a majestic Crested serpent eagle and a severely dehydrated baby kite.

In Mumbai, birds have been falling from the sky. Dr JC Khanna, former chairman of Bai Sakarbai Dinshaw Petit Hospital for Animals, Mumbai's largest government-run animal hospice, says heat waves hit birds hard. "It doesn't help that Mumbai is a concrete jungle and they don't have trees they can access. So, they keep on flying, get exhausted and plummet to the



Piyal Bhattacharjee



HOT TOPIC: Children bring in a dehydrated bird to Delhi's Wildlife Rescue. (Right) A doctor associated with RAWW in Mumbai treats a sick bird

ground," he adds. The other problem is the scarcity of water spots where they can cool off.

Mumbai non-profit Resqink Association for Wildlife Welfare (RAWW) has treated more than 200 birds for dehydration and heat-related ailments this summer. Founder Pawan Sharma says birds collapse in the heat and go into shock. "In most cases, we care for them for a few days and then they can fly back. But some unfortunate ones need surgery or do not make it."

Delhi's Wildlife Rescue mainly deals with birds of prey. "And this is baby season for black kites or cheels. They're at the age where they start leaving their nests out of curiosity and often fall to the ground," says Shehzaad. Saud adds that with new babies in tow, birds have more need for food and water as they also provide for the mate who looks after the babies. Young chicks also need more shaded areas but those living in urban areas keep clearing nests in building crevices.

Rescue operations are heavily dependent on Good Samaritans doing their bit. Ahmedabad-based non-profit Jivdaya Trust's head of operations Sumeet Gurbani says of the 1,600 birds treated between May 1-20, 70% were brought in because of the heat. So, growing awareness among regular folk who know enough to bring injured birds in is a huge help. "We got 200 birds in a year when we started out in

2007. But with awareness campaigns and our helpline number, more people make the effort to bring them in," he adds. Once brought in, the birds are kept in a cooled cage covered with a green net. They also have a fogging system to keep them cool.

Many are referred from bird hospitals. The forest department, Delhi Police and fire department also bring in the birds they find. While experts encourage people to put out water with a sprinkling of glucose, Shehzaad suggests putting out food too. Asif Khan, associate officer at the Bombay Natural History Society, says, "Leaving a bowl of clean water in the shade every two-three days is helpful in urban areas. Some try to treat the distressed birds themselves. But, unlike us, birds do not sweat. So, a layperson wouldn't know how to care for a heat-stroke bird." Khan feels they should call a vet or bird helpline instead.

Studies have shown the impact of heat on the avian world. An Australian study on the Jacky Winters bird species found that 29% disappeared and were presumed dead within 24 hours of temperatures hitting a record 49° in 2019. Heat also affects their reproductive abilities.

And it's not just about one species, Sharma warns. "One species impacts others. Birds control insect populations. It's going to impact the food chain and our delicate ecological balance."