

Wildlife through the lens

NATURE A wild life photo exhibition to educate the public on environment conservation



LESSONS FROM NATURE Students at the exhibition PHOTO: K. ANANTHAN

The King Cobra spits 14 ounces of poison in seconds," says environmentalist M. Yoganathan, pointing to a close-up shot of the spectacular snake. And, the man behind the lens is Nature photographer K. Ramachandran. "Nature lovers risk their lives to capture wildlife. But, these rare photographs are a wealth of information for the general public," Yoganathan adds. And, that is the reason why Thozhar Trust, Samooga Sirpigaal Trust, Thirukkural Araperavai and Vidhaigal Trust have come together, collected such rare photographs and have put them on display at the Coimbatore Zoo to send home the message on environment conservation. "We chose World Forest Day (March 21), World Water Day (March 22)

and the weekend to draw crowds from schools, colleges and the general public to create awareness on the rich bio-diversity of our eco-system," he explains. A slide show on global warming is also a part of the exhibition.

Wild movements

Be it the venomous King cobra, raw-scaled viper, or the not-so-venomous common sand boa and Travancore wolf snake, Ramachandran has captured them all in his series on snakes.

Photographer R.T. Sriram in his tiger snaps brings out the mood swings in the tiger—the ferocious and the sober ones. Wild flowers, birds, Lion tailed Macaques, Malabar grey horn bill, insectivorous plants like pitcher plants, etc that figure in

his collection is a visual treat. You also get to see the photographs of the Star tortoise, Travancore tortoise and Indian flapshell tortoise.

"Recently, a herd of elephants was crushed to death in Coimbatore. That is when we woke up to the fact that there was an upset in the balance of the ecosystem. Animals are forced to come out of their natural habitat because we have intruded into their space," says P. Santhakumar of the Thozhar Trust that helps cremate abandoned and unidentified bodies.

There is a pretty 'Butterfly corner' with a line-up of winged beauties, the common rose butterfly in striking black and pink, orangish fruit moth, banded peacock in breathtaking blue, the common nawab (watch out for

the colourful crown pattern it sits pretty on its wings) and four wing butterfly, caught camera.

Educative

If T.R. Arundharseelva photographs capture serpent gles and forest lizards, Dr. R. T stoy's visuals present breathtaking beauty of the Western Ghats.

Did you know that all the ma ecosystems — mountain, land, mangrove, desert, for marine, coral reef and islan known to occur worldwide represented in India? You w when you read the educat charts also put up at the show, till March 23 from 10 a.m. to p.m.

K.J.E:

Not an easy drive for Kovai winner

G. JAGANNATH

DC | CHENNAI

June 3: A lover of nature, Marimuthu Yoganathan, a bus conductor with the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation, has planted more than a lakh saplings across the state in the last 25 years.

Based in Coimbatore, this environmental activist says his fondness for planting trees started when as a young boy, he would go into the forest while writing poetry. "Felling of trees and clearing of forests affected me a lot. Hence I decided to educate students on the importance of conservation through slide shows. Simultaneously, I started with my mission of planting saplings," he said.

Mr Yoganathan, who is a recipient of the Eco Warrior Award-2008, instituted by the Earth Matters Foundation, has conducted over 2000 slide shows in schools, colleges and other institutions across the state. "When visiting schools, I conduct lectures with slide shows on a manual projector. I have about 1500 slides containing interesting facts and figures. These shows are followed by tree planting," he said.

Yoganathan feels that school students are more receptive and concerned about the environment than others. "I always suggest to the students, for instance, that they can plant a tree on their birthday. And daily, I get about 15 calls from school students asking for saplings," he said.

The bus conductor has also donned the mantle of filmmaker with his 30-minute documentary *Thagam* highlighting the importance of saving trees and forests.



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M. Yoganathan
environment activist

"I made the film with the help of members of Tamil Nadu Transport Staff Federation who contributed Rs 5 each," he said. Awaiting funds for his next project, he says, "I have readied a script for a documentary on agriculture and dwindling land resources."

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