



Virtual Interactive Event on International Mountain Day

Handprint Actions for Sustaining Mountain Biodiversity

11 December 2020 (Friday) from 3.30 – 5.30 pm

Background

Centre for Environment Education (CEE) as lead organization for RCE Lucknow and RCE Guwahati commemorated International Mountain Day as a Virtual Interactive Event. This year the International Mountain Day Theme is “Mountain Biodiversity”. The event was organized by CEE’s Northern Regional Cell and Himalayan Initiative in association with CEE’s North East Regional office as part of its association with Mountain Partnership, The Global Goals, UNU- IAS for RCE Initiative and CEE’s Paryavaran Mitra Programme.

The event was focused on orienting the participants thinking and taking Handprint Actions for Sustaining Mountain Biodiversity at individual and community level. The overall concept of this virtual event was to observe the talk of young minds and students from different region of mountain areas and listening about their work experiences on conserving the mountain biodiversity in their region and also their concern about the biodiversity in mountain regions. Followed by the students talk expert panel will express their experience of working in the mountain region and respond to students concerns of mountain biodiversity.

Around 100 participants including school and college students from Uttarakhand, Himanchal Pradesh and Assam participated in this event.



About Virtual Event proceedings

The event was initiated with welcome and briefing on the day theme and event format by CEE representative. Ms. Bijaylakshmi and Mr. Neeraj from CEE shared some of the interesting facts about mountain ecosystem to the participants.

Ms. Preeti R. Kanaujia, Coordinator of RCE Lucknow briefed the participants about the concept of ecological footprint and said that through this tool one can measure their resource use and how many earth needed to support their lifestyle. While explaining the handprint concept she gave several examples how we can increase our handprint for nurturing and conserving the nature and reduce our footprint. She explained about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and said that though SDG 15 is directly connected but other SDG goals like goal 4, quality education and goal 13, climate actions are equally important and connected to today's theme. She said that we need to think about how we can achieve these goals by connecting and partnering with each other and come up with individual and community level handprint actions.



Young Environment Leader students from different region of mountain areas were invited to talk about their experiences in conserving mountain biodiversity and also raise their concerns.

Ms. Varnika Garg and Ms. Ananya Joshi from Delhi Public School, Ranipur, Haridwar, Uttarakhand shared their learning and experience of learning about mountain biodiversity and her interaction with local community and her grandparents on changes in the mountains. Teacher from the school Ms. Sangeeta Joshi was also invited to share her experience of motivating students to study about biodiversity around them in school and home.



Ms. Arya Singh, student of St. Mary's Convent College Nainital, Uttarakhand elaborated the rich biodiversity of Himalayan region in terms of bird species, butterflies, insects, animals and plant diversity as well. She explained the nature's beauty and also raised her concerns due to expansion of tourism activities in these areas. She raised her concerns about the increased pressure on natural resources and demand generated due to tourism related activities. She said that apart from sustainable development plans and education and awareness of the people, a micro climate conservation plan is an urgent requirement.



Mr. Shivam Walia, a student of St Paul's Senior Secondary School, Palampur, Kangra, Himachal Pradesh explained his experience about a project on studying birds which is supported by National Geographic Society, implemented by an organization “Life Meets the Lens”, Himachal Pradesh in his school and his village. He said that now he has identified all the birds in his school and village and which bird is migrating when. In future these learning can be used to identify which bird is missing a particular season and why. He also encouraged other students to participate in such projects.



Ms. Mayuri Duara, PG student in Zoology, Royal Global University, Guwahati, Assam explained her experiences of taking conservation action for mountain biodiversity in her region. She remembered her engagement in the rally and her visit to the Assam Zoo. She shared her experience of sample bird count study being carried out in her campus and surrounding areas. She said that she has documented more than 125 species of migratory birds near several human habitations in Guwahati city.



Followed by the student’s experience sharing session, the expert panel expressed their experience of working in the mountain region and responded to students concerns of mountain biodiversity.

Mr. Jagdamba Prasad Maithani, Founder Aagaas Federation shared his experiences on working with the mountain communities. He said that the Aagaas principal objective is to promote the communities self employment based on their immediate resources and conservation and restoration of the mountain resources. He further said as he believed until local resources give you the opportunities of employment you will never connect with them and never think of their conservation.

Mr. Vikram Singh, Founder of Life Meets the Lens, Himachal Pradesh presented his experience and said that he is working on his village biodiversity since last 3 years. He is observing the biodiversity of his village and documenting it. He said that he is collecting the biodiversity components since last 22 years when he was at the age of 8 years. He has developed a museum and kept many specimens there which were collected by him. He mentioned that his collection include lots of insects, butterflies, bird nests, feathers, seeds, bones and lot more. He said that through his work he is educating the locals, youth and students about the nature and biodiversity and aware them that we are the only one of the species like others, we don’t have right to rule on other species, destroying them or their habitat. He said that with the help of National Geographic Society grant he is educating 20 youth and students of his village, they are helping him in documenting the biodiversity of the area. Since last one year we have documented around 1200-1300 species of animals, plants and mushrooms.

Ms. Nidhi Sharma, Associate Manager- Education, Waste Warrior Society explained about the birth of Waste Warrior Society. She mentioned that this society emerged through voluntary actions in Dharamshala when a British women Jodie Underhill visited Dharmshala and by seeing lots of litter here and there and started cleaning alone and after that many youth and university students joined her. She said that other speakers also mentioned about the sensitivity of mountain regions and we are carelessly exploiting it. We are consuming more and more and generating waste in our current lifestyle. People are visiting the mountains and left lots of their rubbish in and around tourist areas. There is no provision of managing waste at the mountains and this waste is impacting the natural resources and biodiversity of mountain regions. In our generation we know enough there is no gap of knowledge but we are not practicing it and not incorporating this knowledge in our lifestyle.

Dr. Simanta Kalita, Programme Director and in charge CEE North East and RCE Guwahati expressed his views, experiences and also the beauty of mountains through his photographs. Everything is connected through a web and disturbance in any thread making to whole web collapse. So here our handprint actions start, we should think of our immediate environment and take positive actions to protect it.



Participants were asked to share their reflections and also ask questions to the panel. Many youth asked in what way they can work for mountain biodiversity conservation. Expert panel guided them on possible actions which could be taken by them. The event ended with vote of thanks and a group photo.

