

Mass Awareness Drive on “World Wetlands Day” with a theme “Wetlands for Disaster Risk Reduction”

World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on 2 February since 1971. The theme for the year 2017 is “Wetlands for Disaster Risk Reduction”.

Wetlands are vital part of nature. Wetlands act as a natural exfoliator, absorbing and storing excess rainfall and reducing flooding. During the dry season, they release the water stored, delaying the onset of droughts and reducing water shortages. The frequency of natural disasters worldwide has more than doubled in just 35 years, driven by climate- and weather-related hazards like flooding, tropical cyclones and droughts. UN Water estimates that 90% of all natural hazards are water-related. And the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts even more extreme events going forward.

Like previous years, we along with our volunteers spread awareness on wetlands from on 31 January to 2 February 2017 continuously by distributing pamphlets and flyers about wetlands conservation. The programme started with a wetlands awareness campaign from the campus of University of Lucknow to 15 schools and 11 colleges of different regions of Lucknow. About 7000 school students of 51 schools and colleges along with 10,000 common people of areas Nirala Nagar, Aliganj, Ashiana, Manak nagar, Alambagh, Jankipuram, Gomtinagar, Babuganj, Mohanlalganj, Mehmoodabad were made aware about wetlands and their importance.

On 2 February the students were taken to Nawabganj Bird Sanctuary for wetlands bird diversity survey, identification and counting from 8:00 am onwards. Amita Kanaujia motivated the volunteers and students to explore the wetlands there and the probable threats and how to conserve them. Students were divided into different teams with a team leader were set



Wetland conservation awareness spread amongst common masses



Lecture delivered by Amita Kanaujia about the Wetlands Conservation and water birds

free in different directions in Nawabganj Bird Sanctuary to count the flora and fauna found in and around wetland. Different migratory and resident wetland birds were found. A total number of 56 water bird species were counted by students. Some of the migratory birds recorded by student were mallard, Northern shoveller, gadwall, cotton pygmy goose, shelduck etc. Finally, Amita Kanaujia gave a brief presentation to aware the students about wetlands, their role and the causes of decline and conservation measures.

Submitted by: Amita Kanaujia and Adesh Kumar, Biodiversity & Wildlife Conservation Lab, Department of Zoology, University of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. Email: kanaujia.amita@gmail.com

Rise for the Sparrows

“Rise for the Sparrows” is the theme for World Sparrow Day, 20 March 2017. Nature Forever Society, Nashik in 2010 for the first time, initiated World Sparrow Day. Conservation education programmes are needed, especially in parts of India such as Bundelkhand Region where conservationism and environmental education is not sufficiently implemented in official school curricula. Thus for creating awareness for House Sparrows, conservation education programmes were launched in Bundelkhand Region in Central India (from December 2016-March 2017) with the aim to sensitize school children for the conservation and sustainable management of House Sparrows and their habitats.

In Bundelkhand region, House sparrows start breeding in February that continues till June, so the target was to provide them the nesting space in the form of artificial nest boxes before



Submitted by: Sonika Kushwaha, Indian Biodiversity Conservation Society. Email: ibcsforall@gmail.com

the onset of breeding period. With this intention, Indian Biodiversity Conservation Society (IBCS) organized workshops in various government and private schools of Uttar Pradesh and



Awareness and nest box installation in rural areas

Madhya Pradesh of Bundelkhand Region. Each workshop had the same course schedule and content. The workshops were divided in two parts. In the first part, students were introduced to House sparrow Biology spotting sparrows/ their nests and male/female identification tasks. The awareness material in Hindi was provided to the participants. The latter two activities allowed students to move around and actively and playfully learn about House sparrows.

In the second part, students were introduced to causes of House Sparrow decline such as unavailability of nesting sites, excessive use of pesticides, preference of exotic plants instead of native plants and change in the human lifestyles. They were taught how to make their own Sparrow nest box with the help of shoeboxes, earthen pots, tin cans, and cardboard boxes. The students learnt the scientific requirements that are to be followed while preparing the nest boxes such as the size of entrance hole should be between 3-3.5 cm in diameter. A hole bigger than this; will draw other birds such as Rock chats and Myna species in the nest box. Special importance was placed on the demonstration of how to install the prepared artificial nest boxes at safe places that will attract House Sparrows.

The artificial nest boxes were installed in the schools also. This part of the workshop was mainly done in a lecturer-centered way. Apart from students, the children in villages were also taught to make artificial nest boxes. Painting and poem competitions were also organized for the students on the topic “House Sparrows: Our Little Chirping Friends”. The students took pledge to conserve house sparrows. On 20 March small bushy native plants were planted in the school campuses. House sparrows are known to roost in the small bushy plants that are safe for them and also serve as a source of insects that the house sparrows forage on for their chicks for a protein rich diet. Besides this the volunteers helped in the preparation and

installation of nest boxes in villages and cities in the houses of all the sparrow enthusiasts. The school staffs (Mamta, Sumita Khatlohiya, Jyoti Kushwaha, Sahib Singh, Aarti, Devendra, Ram Lohar, Virendra Kumar, Vijay Shankar Srivastav, Rajendra Kumar Adjariya, Priyadarshani, Sachin K Maheshwari) were friendly, engaging and highly effective at communicating the urgency and relevance of House Sparrow conservation. Wild Geo Excursion (Orchha, Madhya Pradesh) and Sarthak Pragati Prayas Sansthan (Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh) collaborated in the initiatives.

Submitted by: Sonika Kushwaha, Indian Biodiversity Conservation Society, Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh. Email: ibcsforall@gmail.com

Sparrow Conservation and World Sparrow Day celebrated in University of Lucknow



Sparrow awareness car campaign

Among the various species of birds, the house sparrow *Passer domesticus* is closely associated with human habitations and cultivation throughout the world from historic time. Biodiversity and Wildlife Conservation Lab, Department of Zoology, University of Lucknow in collaboration with Uttar Pradesh

State Biodiversity Board and Regional Science City, Aliganj is celebrating Sparrow Day from 2009 onwards and also started an initiative “Gharaunda 700” in October 2015 with an aim to install 700 sparrow nest boxes in the city within a year.



Winners felicitated by certificates and books

Besides, in collaboration with U.P.State Biodiversity Board, and Department of Forests,U.P. we completed the project on sparrows entitled, “Status, distribution, and threats with special emphasis on conservational measures of house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) in urban and rural areas of Lucknow District of Uttar Pradesh”. The project found out that Lucknow abodes a promising population of house sparrow. Three kinds of sparrow nest boxes have been installed in different areas of the city and the bird very well adapts them. Out of three types the most preferred one was wooden box followed by shoebox and the least preferred was earthen pots.

The volunteers of lab have distributed around 1000 nest boxes in the city and spread awareness in about 400 schools in last two years. As part of it, Prof.Amita Kanaujia along with research scholars and volunteers of Biodiversity and Wildlife Conservation Lab organized four days awareness programme from 17 to 20 March 2017 and celebrated World Sparrow Day with great enthusiasm. Four teams went in different directions of the city and rural areas. Maximum number of people made created awareness along with students of various schools and collages of Lucknow as well as common people.

On 20 March various programmes such as poster, rangoli, quiz and photography competitions based on house sparrows, were organized at Regional Science City. The winners got felicitated with books as prizes.

Sparrow count: Since 2009 an appeal was made to the public through print and electronic media to count sparrow in and around their garden/house on 20 March in the morning from 6-7 am. For that a counting form was distributed with awareness materials. This activity motivated the people to think about the sparrow if it is not found around their garden. Hence people were forced to make efforts to bring them back. Some of the recent years total count of the sparrows were: 2013-2503; 2014-3363; 2015-5637; 2016-6036 and 2017-7066. Social media was used to share information regarding sparrow’s number in their locality.



Rangoli competition in progress

Submitted by: Amita Kanaujia and Adesh Kumar, Biodiversity & Wildlife Conservation Lab, Department of Zoology, University of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. Email: kanaujia.amita@gmail.com