

HCL Foundation

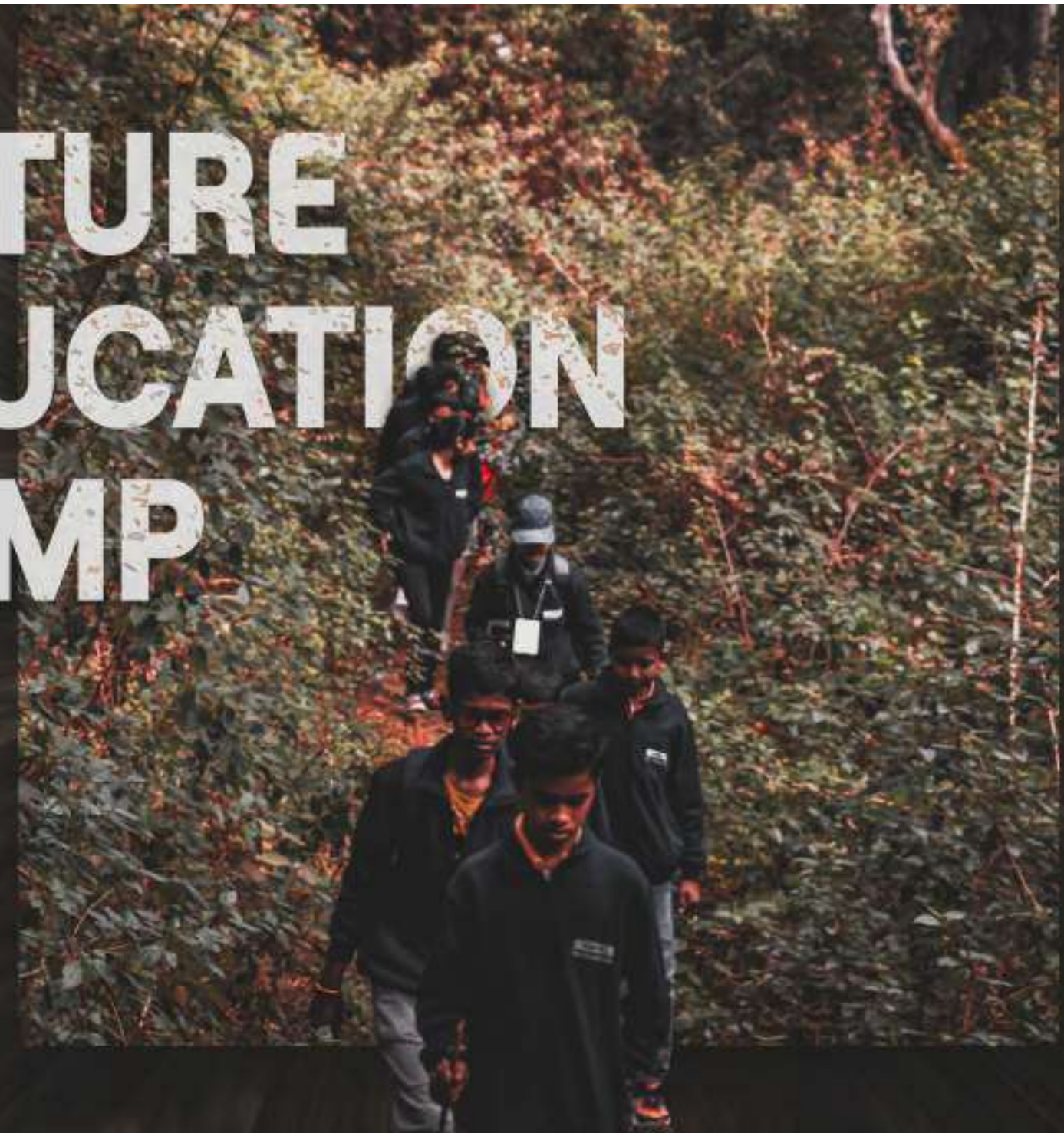
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NATURE EDUCATION CAMP



HCL HARIT

THE GREEN INITIATIVE

A distinct flagship programme
for Environment Action

Vision

"To conserve, restore and enhance indigenous environmental systems and respond to climate change in a sustainable manner through community engagement."

Aligning with the UN's 'Decade of Ecosystem Restoration', HCL Harit conserves, restores and enhances indigenous environmental systems.

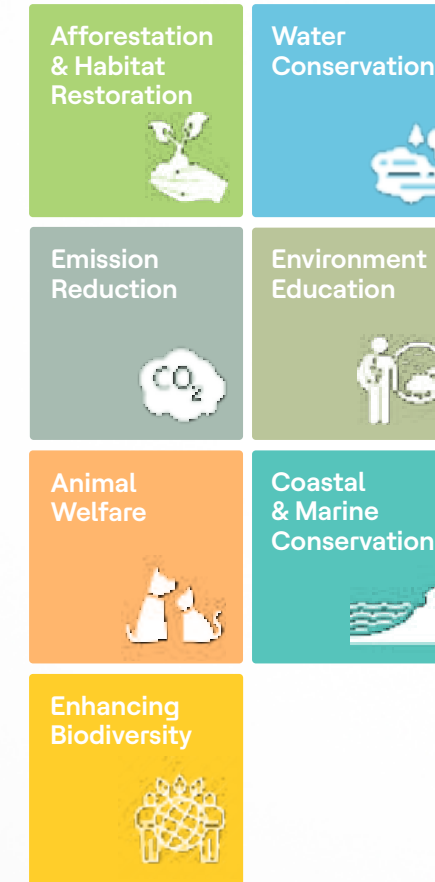
With participation and stewardship of local communities, it is implementing sustainable measures to combat climate change.

Spread across nine states and embracing ecosystems from mountains to sea,

HCL Harit is working with urgency to mitigate the impact of environment degradation.



THEMATICS



Experience the joy and excitement as young minds engage in nature-based games, team-building exercises, and environmental projects that foster a sense of community and respect for all living beings.

Under this initiative laid out by the HCL Foundation, we share the inspiring stories of children who discover their innate connection to nature and develop a lifelong commitment to sustainability.



Introduction

Being out in nature imparts an authentic context for promoting environmental responsibility through which children and adults develop environmental consciousness, awareness, and admiration for nature. It allows an individual to identify their relationship with the environment, gaining skills and a responsible attitude towards sustainability, biodiversity, and eco-empathy.

Keeping in mind that learning through nature is a strong conservation tool, HCL Foundation, through HCL Harit initiated a 'Nature Education Camp' for giving learners the freedom to explore, time to 'be', and to observe the environment. Particularly, in a natural setting with a perspective to develop a first-hand learning experience through collaborative, inquisitive, and critical thinking skills, creating consciousness for the environment.

The camp aims to

- orient students to the unique biological and cultural aspects
- expose students to conservation and sustainability practices
- learn about the need for conservation of the biodiversity
- develop skills of the students towards leadership, teamwork, and effective communication

This is how it began

Students were selected through a short individual survey to understand their basic knowledge about the environment, their interests, and their inclination to learn about the environment.

Post-student selection, an advisory document was shared with participants providing salient details about the camping rules along with a consent form to be signed by their parents or guardian.

The child protection task force ensured all necessary child protection measures were planned and executed throughout the camp.

HCL Foundation Child Protection task force team, chaperons from HCLF partnered Child Fund India, Rural Development Council along with paramedical staff from 'Doctors for you' were present throughout the camp to ensure all norms of Child Protection policies are duly followed.





Location of Base Camp

Aiyur Eco Tourism park is located 1060 mts above the sea level in western ghats region. It is situated at a distance of about 35 Kms from Hosur and 15 Kms from Denkanikottai, a beautiful place surrounded by thick forest. Kodagarai is the highest peak in this area.

This eco-tourism park is well equipped with bamboo huts, heritage huts, modern lodges and guesthouses, modern watch towers and tree top watch towers. A children's playground, gardens and artificial waterfall are the main attractions of the park.



North Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary

Located between Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri districts of Tamil Nadu, the North Cauvery Wildlife connects northern Cauvery River in Tamil Nadu state and the southern Cauvery river connects to the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary of Karnataka. Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary spans an area of 1,027.53 km sq. The forest has a major chunk of luxuriant woodland of Arjun (*Terminalia arjuna*), Jamun (*Syzygium cumini*), Oil cake (*Albizia amara*), Tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), Mango (*Mangifera indica*), Anjan (*Hardwickia binate*), and several other species of acacia, Feronia and Ficus.

The sanctuary is a dwelling land of a myriad of wildlife and avifaunal species. The forest offers a perfect setting for numerous endangered as well as vulnerable species to dwell around. Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*), wild pig (*Sus scrofa*), Common Indian leopard (*Panthera pardus fusca*), wild dog (*Cuon alpinus*), spotted deer (*Axis axis*), barking deer (*Muntiacus muntjak*), sambar (*Cervus unicolor*), four-horned antelope (*Tetracerus quadricornis*), black-naped hare (*Lepus nigricollis*), chevrotain (*Moschiola indica*), bonnet macaque (*Macaca radiata*), honey badger (*Mellivora capensis*), Malabar giant squirrel (*Ratufa indica maxima*), grizzled giant squirrel (*Ratufa macroura*) are some animals that can be spotted in the Sanctuary.

The Sanctuary accounts for various avifauna species like the white-rumped vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*)

and Indian vulture (*Gyps indicus*). The four vulnerable species reportedly seen are Nilgiri wood-pigeon (*Columba elphinstonii*), greater spotted eagle (*Clanga clanga*), white-naped tit (*Parus nuchalis*) and yellow-throated bulbul (*Pycnonotus xantholaemus*). Other bird species reported are some species of Malayan Tropical Dry Zone which includes the near-threatened red-headed vulture (*Sarcogyps calvus*). Some notable resident species here include brown boobook (*Ninox scutulata*), white-bellied blue-flycatcher (*Cyornis pallipes*), stork-billed kingfisher (*Pelagorpsis capensis*), green imperial-pigeon (*Ducula aenea*) and Indian scops-owl (*Otus bakkamoena*), Indian courser (*Cursorius coromandelicus*), Malabar parakeet (*Psittacula columboides*), large-billed leaf warbler (*Phylloscopus magnirostris*), green leaf-warbler (*Phylloscopus nitidus*), western crowned leaf warbler (*Phylloscopus occipitalis*), fairy-bluebird, Indian blue robin (*Larvivora brunnea*), yellow-throated bulbul (*Pycnonotus xantholaemus*), the crested goshawk (*Accipiter trivirgatus*), rosefinch, Blyth's swift, Orphean warbler, European bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*), and Eurasian crag martin (*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*).

The river Cauvery also serves as the home to various species of reptiles like the mugger crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*), Reptile species in the sanctuary are Indian rock python (*Python molurus*), Indian cobra (*Naja naja*), Russell's viper (*Daboia russelii*) and banded krait (*Bungarus fasciatus*).



“Let Nature
be your teacher.”

– William Wordsworth

About the camp

Taking a lead in environment education and instilling empathy and understanding of the natural environment and ecosystems, HCL Foundation organized a 4-day (5th - 8th January 2023) residential Nature Education Camp in Denkanikottai (Tamil Nadu) as part of its flagship programme, HCL Harit.

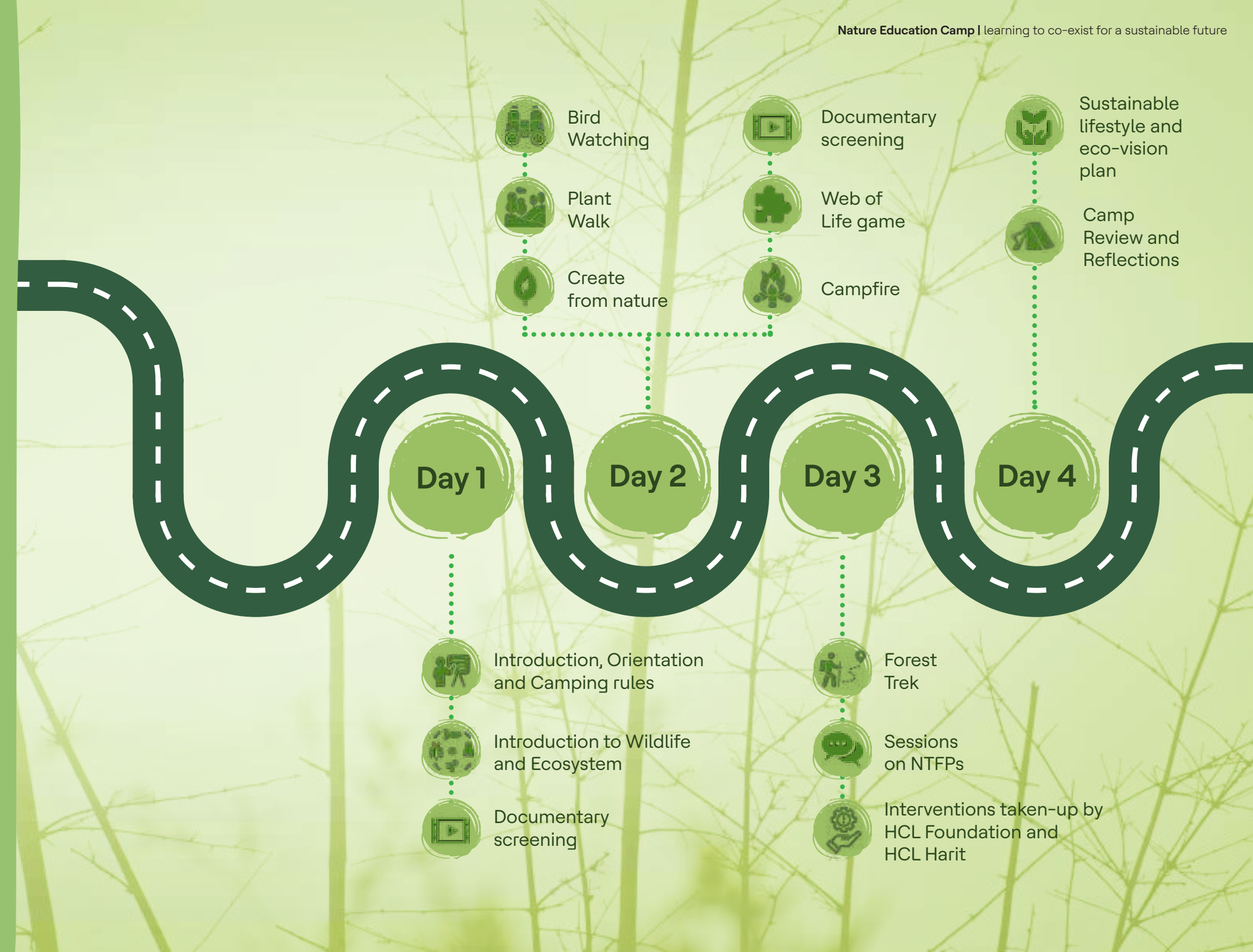
This camp included 20 students from the government high schools in Kudlu and Beretana Agrahara in Bengaluru, as well as 5 students from the nearby Kodagere community. This was a first-of-its-kind opportunity for these Bengaluru students to live in a forest and gain firsthand knowledge of forest ecosystems.

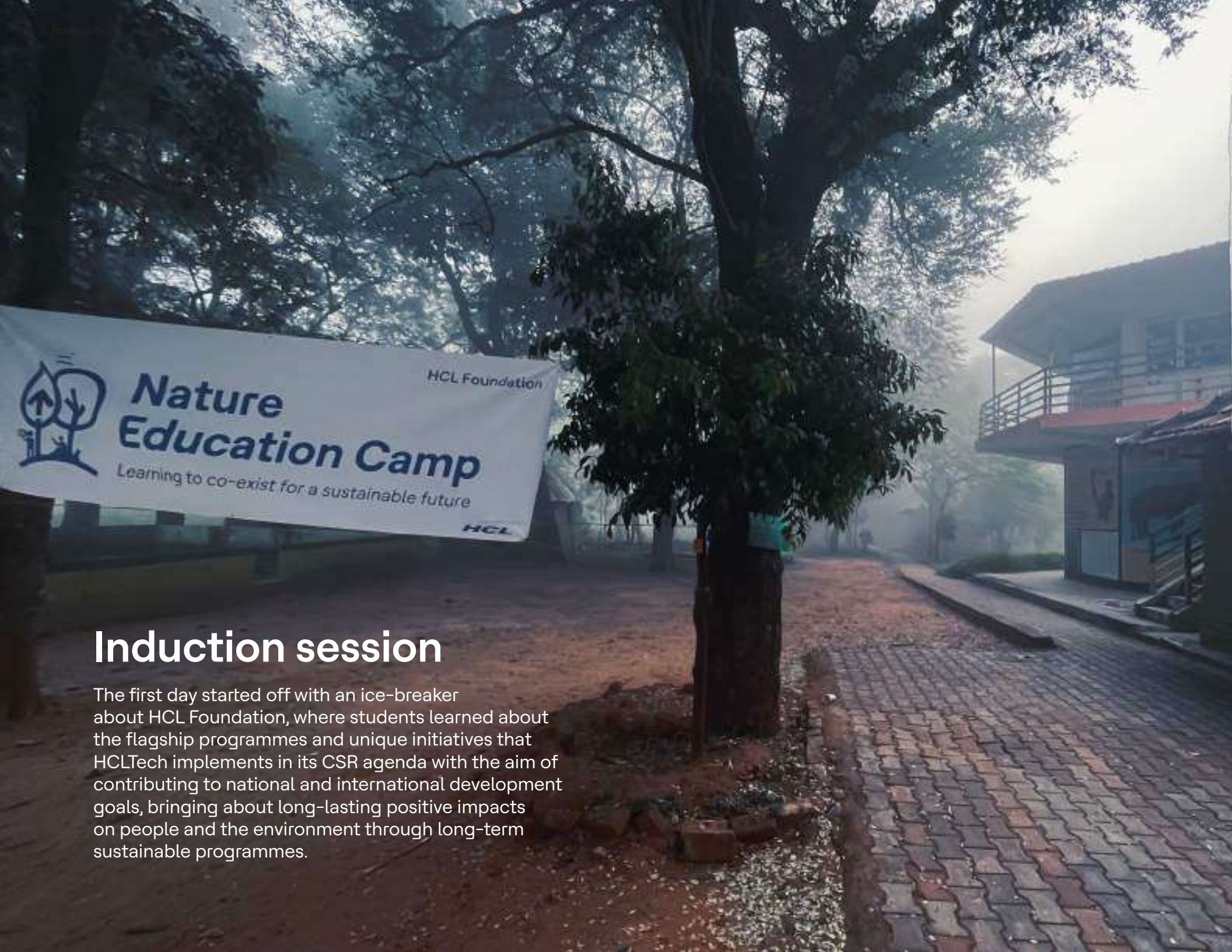
To determine the students' degree of knowledge and level of concern regarding the nature, a pre-assessment test was administered to them. The camp's activities and sessions, as well as the specific do's and don'ts for camping in the forest, were first explained to the students.

They participated in a number of sessions where they were exposed to information on the flora, fauna, biodiversity, and wildlife of the Cauvery region. To further their understanding, a variety of documentaries were also showcased during the course.

Then came fun field activities like bird watching, plant walks, an art and craft session, a game about the web of life, and forest trekking, along with a perpetual learning about sustainable living and conscious lifestyles.

A day-wise insight into camp activities follows.





Induction session

The first day started off with an ice-breaker about HCL Foundation, where students learned about the flagship programmes and unique initiatives that HCLTech implements in its CSR agenda with the aim of contributing to national and international development goals, bringing about long-lasting positive impacts on people and the environment through long-term sustainable programmes.





The participants were informed on how HCL Harit, as a flagship programme for the environment, is charged with preserving, restoring, and enhancing indigenous environmental systems, as well as mitigating climate change sustainably through community engagement.

Thereafter, the campers were treated to an introduction to the sanctuary's history. To foster teamwork and help them adjust to multicultural learning and coexistence, 25 students were divided into five diverse groups.





Wildlife and ecosystem

As part of the wildlife and ecosystem session, students learned how unique ecosystems are interconnected and how each flora and fauna plays a crucial part in maintaining the ecological balance despite their sizes and complexity.

During the camp they had the chance to observe the beauty of the wildlife and ecosystem up close and personal, as well as to learn how human activity affects these delicate ecosystems and how one can lessen this impact as a responsible citizen to preserve it for future generations.

Additionally, they were recognized for the various initiatives undertaken by the HCL Foundation to revive the natural ecosystems by restoring the habitats in order to bring back the native biodiversity and provide areas for breeding and flourishing.





Documentary screening

In the documentary session, an audio-visual retrospective with an explanation was conducted to encourage students' empathy for nature, establish in-depth learning about the geography they belong to, cover the significance of each species and their habitats, and enhance their approach to a sustainable lifestyle to coexist.

With captivating footage of animals in their natural habitat, "Wild Karnataka" depicted the state with the greatest number of tigers and elephants. By highlighting the area's abundant biodiversity, the majority of which is still unknown to the general public, this documentary added to the learning curve.

A documentary on the river Cauvery was also showcased, revealing how the adjacent geographies of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu share their dependencies. "Let the Kaveri flow", narrates the mythological tale of the river, from its birth to its fateful demise. It was poignantly reminded of the state of the river and how human-made activities led to its fateful demise.



Another documentary highlighted the conflicts between people and elephants in the Karnataka and Assam regions as well as the steps taken by the forest department to protect the elephants and promote human-animal coexistence.

These sessions were done in order to evaluate the conclusions the students had drawn and to direct them toward the causes of the problem and potential solutions.



A session on bird watching

A bird watching session was arranged for the students to enhance their observation skills while giving them an opportunity to learn up-close, and to instill a sense of responsibility towards nature.

During the activity, students were taught how to use binoculars. They learnt how to recognize birds based on their habitat, size, color, and distinctive features/characteristics. They were also taught about bird behavior, migration patterns, and habitats.

For their review, handouts depicting the important characteristics of the local bird species were made available. They were also taught to recognize the calls of the birds in the sanctuary and were exposed to a variety of bird sounds.







Plant talk on the walk

Similar in line with the bird watching activity, a plant walk was conducted aiming to develop a deeper appreciation for nature and the environment amongst the students.

Students learned about the different parts of plants, how they grow, and their ecological importance. They were also taught about different plant species, their characteristics, and features such as the shape of leaves, color, and texture.

Since both bird watching and plant walk involved walking or hiking, it was a fun and engaging way to get some physical activity during the camp.





A tale of the forest trail

Students were exposed to nature through hiking in Kodagere Forest in order to better understand the ecosystem and wildlife there. They took part in activities that involved identifying wild animal markings, plant species, insects, and birds that passed by the trail in order to improve their experience.

Students were told inspiring anecdotes and information about forests and biodiversity while being escorted by chaperones and under the direction of knowledgeable HCL Foundation subject specialists on forestry and wild life. To advance their learning interest, previously learned lessons about plant and bird identification were now put into practice in the forest.





For most of our history, and indeed all of our pre-history, we have had an intimate connection with nature and the natural world and from an evolutionary perspective it would be no surprise to still find echoes of this in our behaviour (Frumkin, 2001).





Learning from the expert

The wildlife and forest experts in this session imparted to the students their extensive knowledge of the ecology of forests and the surrounding environment. A discussion on Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs), particularly medicinal plants and their use in the modern world, was led by Mr. Raja Mariyappan, Assistant Conservator of Forests, Tamil Nadu Forest Division.

Additionally, the science and practice of forest management were taught to the students, as well as how to balance these aspects with ecological and conservation concerns. They also learned how they can support these efforts.





Sustainable lifestyle

In this session, students were taught the fundamentals of sustainability, such as minimizing waste, preserving water and energy, and protecting the environment, in order to foster a sense of responsibility and consciousness toward nature conservation.

Students were given the task of coming up with creative solutions to environmental issues during the lesson, which served as an encouragement to show off their creativity and problem-solving skills. They were taught to conduct a waste audit within their school and neighborhood as part of their introduction to sustainable lifestyle practices.

Based on the experiential learning they had during the camp, the students created an eco-vision for their school, neighborhood, and city and committed to taking both individual and group actions to ensure a just and sustainable future. They were meant to acquire the abilities and information necessary to live sustainably through these activities.





Create from nature

A fun activity to unleash creativity among the kids on the basis of observations made during the bird-watching exercise.



Pitch your tent

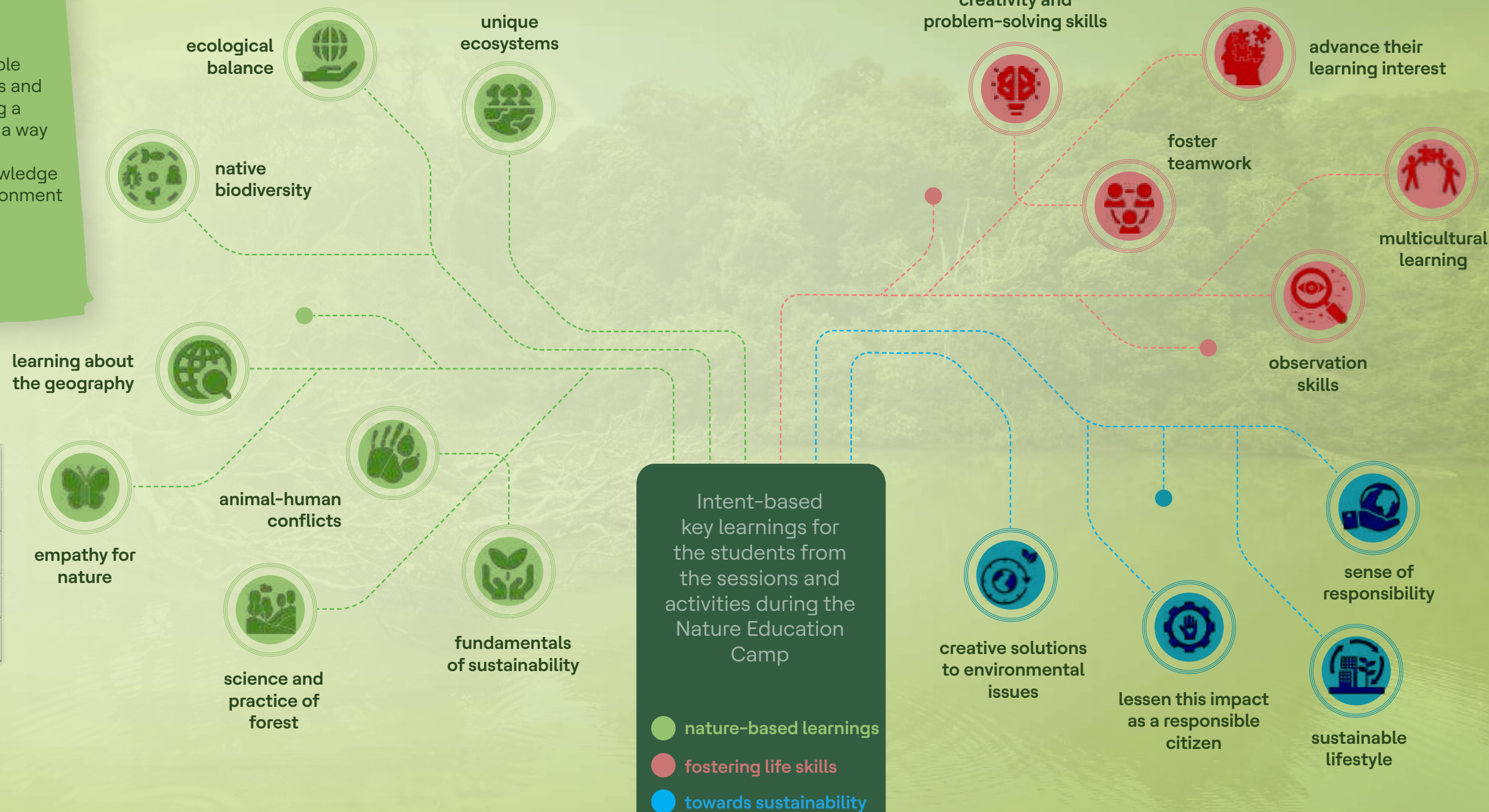
Students learning how to set up tents during the camp.

The final verdict

Children's early camping experiences have the power to transform society by inspiring young people to become involved in environmental issues and developing their critical and creative thinking abilities. In order to ensure a greater understanding of environmental and climate change concerns, this camping activity was designed to create a special platform.

Children will then be able to contribute their skills and efforts toward adopting a sustainable lifestyle, in a way coexisting with nature, by increasing their knowledge of nature and the environment as a result.

According to the results of the pre-camp and post-camp assessments, around 57 percent of students demonstrated improved understanding and knowledge about the environment, 84 percent displayed improved attitudes toward nature and the environment, and 100 percent of students were ready to take the initiative for effective environmental action in their immediate surroundings.

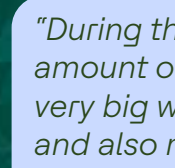




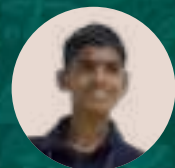
Camp Diary



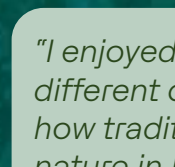
"I always loved birds and these bird watch sessions helped me identify birds, their sounds. I can't wait to do bird watching back home with my friends."
-Janapriya



"During the camp, I understood how even small amount of plastic usage can affect environment in a very big way. I am going to reduce my plastic usage and also make my friends and family aware of this."
-Akshay



"I will share my learnings from the camp with my friends and family to plant trees and take care of them and take more eco-friendly steps in daily activities too."
-Durgesh



"I enjoyed the forest trail walk and learnt about different components of forest ecosystem and how traditional communities are co-existing with nature in harmony."
-Jaya HR



"I learnt about the web of life and how all beings are connected to each other and how even if one organism becomes extinct it can eventually lead to the collapse of the environment."
-Karthik



