

Nov-Dec, 2023

HARIT KHABAR

Monthly Newsletter featuring Environment Action by HCLFoundation



Special
coverage of the
environmental
campaign 'Sorkha:
Ek Jan Abhiyan'
on pages 4 & 5.



Photo: unesco.org

COP 28

The 28th Conference of Parties (COP28) was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) from November 30 to December 2023 on the theme of four groundbreaking perspective shifts — facilitating the energy progress, bringing revolution on climate finance, focusing on nature and livelihoods, and emphasizing inclusivity — denoted a urgent need in worldwide climate action. The conference brought together 198 parties, including 197 nations and the European Union, that have signed the Framework Convention.

Loss and damage fund



Photo: cop28.com

The conference kicked off with promising note with the approval of a climate disaster “loss and damage fund.” First tabled at COP27 in Egypt last year, the fund is a global financial package that will help developing countries that are vulnerable to the consequences of climate change.

The European Union committed around \$275 million, while the UAE pledged \$100 million. Overall, the conference pledged \$475 million to the loss and damage fund.

The first global stocktake of the Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement was a key part of the UNFCCC COP 28 in Dubai.

It concluded the first assessment of progress each country has made towards limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels.



Photo: iStock

Declaration on Food and Agriculture



Photo: justfood.com

The 28th Conference of the Parties (COP 28) started with an pledge of adoption of the UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action. It aims to: increase resilience for farmers, fishers, and food producers; promote food security through social protection systems; support workers in agriculture and food systems to maintain inclusive, decent work; transform production practices by addressing soil health, food waste, and biodiversity loss; support vulnerable people and integrate agriculture and food systems into climate action.

India launched ‘Green Credit Initiative’ at COP28

At COP28, India launched the Green Credit Initiative on December 1, 2023. The initiative creates a global platform for the exchange of innovative environmental programs and instruments. India also insisted on "equity" in climate talks and Prime Minister Narendra Modi offered to host COP33 talks in 2028.



Photo: Global Green News

HCLFoundation @COP28

HCLFoundation took part in the 28th Conference of Parties (COP) climate meeting in Dubai, in which Dr. Nidhi Pundhir, Vice President, Global CSR - HCLTech, and Director, HCLFoundation, led the HCLFoundation contingent and engaged in meaningful conversations with several stakeholders for collective action for a sustainable and resilient future. Dr. Santanu Basu, Project Director, Harit by HCLFoundation, shared the compelling case study on Ghost Net Retrieval during a side session organised by Climatecrew, unleashing the insight into the convergence of innovation2, technology, information, policy, and strategy for the headway of the worldwide blue economy. Esha Mitra actively took part in different sessions focusing on climate resilience, land leadership, and the vital role of youth in climate action, contributing to important discussions that transcended national boundaries.



Photo: HCLF

This air is choking us!

The month of November began with a claustrophobic blanket of smog over Delhi. According to the data released by Swiss air quality technology company IQAir on November 3rd, New Delhi again topped the list of world’s most polluted cities with AQI at 640 in the hazardous category. The government shut schools and non-essential construction was also banned in Delhi.

Similarly, pollution levels spiked in 9 of 11 state capitals after Diwali in the same month. On November 13, the day after Diwali, Delhi recorded PM2.5 level of 395.9 micrograms per cubic meter. This was a 140% increase from the previous morning.



Photo: iStock

Cyclone Michaung

Cyclone Michaung hit Chennai on December 4, 2023, causing heavy rain and widespread flooding, resulting in the deaths of 13 people. It also caused severe damage to infrastructure, including roads, bridges, power lines, and communication networks, leaving many residents displaced and without basic necessities for days. The cyclone was the sixth to develop in the Indian Ocean in 2023.



Photo: iStock

2023 to be the hottest year on record

According to the Copernicus Climate Change Service (part of the European Union's Copernicus Programme, which monitors the Earth's environment and climate), October 2023 was 0.4 degrees Celsius warmer than the previous record for the month in 2019 making it the warmest October globally. Considering the temperatures of the past several months, scientists are sure that 2023 will be the hottest year on record.



Photo: iStock



Photo: iStock

Rice is one of the most highly consumed grains in the world. In the crop year 2021–22, global rice consumption reached 520 million metric tonnes. However, Rice cultivation can contribute to global warming by releasing greenhouse gases like methane, carbon dioxide, and nitrogen oxides. According to a 2020 study (The Global Methane Budget 2000–2017), rice cultivation is responsible for about 8% of global methane emissions from human activity between 2008 and 2017.

Rice's overdependence on water

Rice cultivation depends largely on water. During its growth, the surface of the fields is covered with a layer of water; it also involves repeated flooding and draining. This makes this crop difficult to grow in areas suffering from water scarcity. Rice cultivation can also cause water scarcity, like in Punjab, where over-cultivation of rice threatens to dangerously lower the groundwater reserves of the state. Such situations can have heavy consequences for the climate.

Photo: iStock



Growing rice becoming harmful



Photo: iStock

Traditional methods of crop cultivation have proved to be very harmful for the environment. In terms of rice cultivation, flooding of the paddy fields leads to emissions of large amounts of methane. The burning of rice straw also contributes to air pollution and global warming. As per the Environmental Defense Fund, global rice production is causing as much harm to the environment as 1,200 average sized coal power stations.

Rice cultivation declining



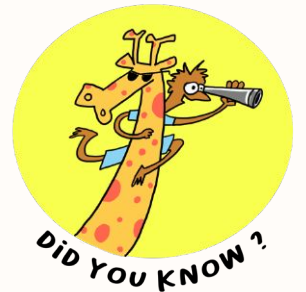
Photo: iStock

Climate change, in return, is also affecting the yield of rice. According to a Chinese research paper titled Extreme rainfall reduces one-twelfth of China's rice yield over the last two decades, extreme rainfall due to climate change will lead to serious disadvantages for cultivation

of crops like rice. It can already be seen that rice cultivation is being affected significantly. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, the world will experience its biggest rice shortage in mere 20 years. It has thus become important to approach the topic of producing a staple crop without causing further significant harm to our environment.

Did You Know?

- Rice is grown on every continent except Antarctica. The climate there is too cold for its cultivation.
- Rice was first domesticated in China about 9,400 years ago.
- China is the biggest consumer of rice. Its consumption was 155 million metric tons of the grain in 2022-23. India comes in second with 108.5 million metric tons.
- The Great Wall Of China was built using rice! While building the famous monument during the Ming Dynasty's reign, the workers used a mixture of sticky rice and calcium carbonate as mortar. This porridge worked very well - seeing that the wall is still standing strong.
- There are more than 40,000 types of rice.



MOVIE REVIEW

Before the Flood

"Before the Flood" is a documentary film that covers the impacts of environmental change in different regions of the world, supporting the way that people are responsible for it. In the film, Leonardo DiCaprio and director Fisher Stevens embark on a two-year journey to comprehend the horrendous impacts of environmental change. Released in 2016, it dives into how can do to prevent the loss of endangered species, ecosystems, and native communities across the globe.



Photo: IMDB

BOOK REVIEW

Climate Justice in India

'Climate Justice in India' is a collection of insightful and well-researched articles by a dozen of the finest scholars and professors of environment, economics, development issues, and social justice from around the world. Edited by Prakash Kashwan and published by Cambridge University Press, the book covers quite a range of topics, starting from energy democracy, the intersectionality of access to drinking water, agroecology, and women's land rights to national and state climate plans, urban policy, caste justice, and environmental and climate social movements in India. The 288-page volume is a must-read for students, policymakers, and activists concerned about the massive effects of climate change happening nationwide.

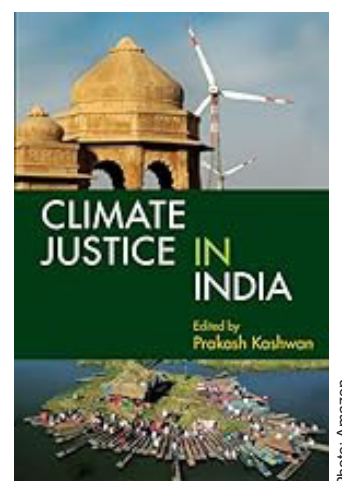


Photo: Amazon



Community engagement and participation is the most effective tools to ensure the long-term sustainability of environmental interventions. Keeping this in mind, World Comics India (WCI) launched an environmental campaign in Sorkha, Noida, in collaboration with Give Me Trees Trust (GMITT) and HCLFoundation. The campaign was targeted towards the community that lives around the urban forest- Harit Upvan in Sorkha, and its objective was to create an environmentally conscious community around the urban forest by increasing communities' direct involvement and ownership over the Harit Upvan.

Harit Upvan, Sorkha, located in Sorkha village, Gautam Budh Nagar, Noida, is a unique initiative by the Give Me Trees Trust, in collaboration with the HCLFoundation and Gautam Budh Nagar District administration, that transformed 12.5 acres of barren and uncultivable land into an urban forest. The urban forest now houses more than 83,000 native trees, shrubs and bushes, 80+ species of mammals, birds, butterflies, amphibians and reptiles.

At First Glance

In the month of November 2022, World Comics India had its first interaction with the student community of Sorkha during a comics workshop organized to mark the completion of five years of Harit Upvan. The stories that were shared during the workshop were very crucial in understanding the changes that were brought about by the urban forest because the local community had seen the transformation firsthand. Undoubtedly, there was a clear need for longer engagement to document the progress and the communities' relationship with Harit Upvan.



First workshop
(50 participants)



33 comics created

Germination of the Idea



It was in March 2023 that WCI got the opportunity to organize a full-fledged grassroots comics workshop for the youth and school students in Sorkha. Around 40 students came together to recreate their memories and experiences of Harit Upvan and produced more than 30 comic stories in the workshop. From the stories, one could easily conclude that the workshop opened up new ways for the participants to see the Harit Upvan and also revealed their passion for storytelling and a deep connection with the nature and wildlife around the Harit Upvan. The workshop laid the foundation for the community-driven model action that took the form of an environmental education and environmental campaign.



Campaign
reached out to
schools and
community

Foot-soldiers of Sorkha

Through months of field interventions and educational activities, the youth and school students of Sorkha were trained to become the ground cadre for the environmental campaign, and through them the campaign reached the community members and schools in Sorkha. WCI played a pivotal role by introducing a participatory approach based on grassroots comics methodology to get these young minds involved. The campaign inspired these 'foot-soldiers of Sorkha' to become

active participants, ensuring that Harit Upvan thrives as a symbol of community pride and environmental stewardship. As this campaign is not merely about planting trees; it's about

cultivating a sense of unity and shared responsibility, ensuring that Harit Upvan thrives for generations to come.



Comics noticeboard installed

Comics noticeboard four

A comics noticeboard was also installed at the Harit Upvan for raising awareness and educating people. Initially, it was placed inside the Upvan but as the campaign picked up pace and community people developed a deeper relationship with the Harit Upvan, the noticeboard was also shifted. The first comics that was displayed at the gate told the story of harit Upvan and its transformation in Sorkha. Meanwhile, through educational sessions, school visits, Harit Khabar distribution, WCI reached out to the community and educated them through comic stories based on the Harit Upvan.



Taking the campaign to schools



The first big milestone for the campaign outside the Harit Upvan urban forest occurred in September 2023 when a grassroots comics exhibition was organized in Gyan Sagar Public School, Sorkha. Led by the comic creators, and helped by WCI team, the students demonstrated their comic stories to their teachers and peers and also took turns to narrate them in their classrooms. The exhibition was a great opportunity for students to raise the important issues of environmental conservatism.

Train, Educate, Expand!



The comic stories on the issues of environment, wildlife and climate change soon spread like wildfire in Sorkha. Every day, new people started to join the campaign. The month of October 2023 saw a tremendous response from youth, students

and community members of Sorkha and many interventions and community meetings were organized to maintain the fervor. To apprise the new participants about the campaign and getting them



onboard, another grassroots comics exhibition was organized. The comic creators from the previous grassroots comics workshop exhibited their comic stories and explained the environmental issues that their comics highlighted. The campaign had gathered a remarkable momentum by now and parents and community people also began to understand the importance of environmental conservation and their role in mitigating it.

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37 comics created

Env Edu sessions via Sorkha

and its own spot

Door-to-door campaign



d to the main entrance. The was 'Badlav' which told the into a beautiful urban forest. skill trainings, exhibitions and to the wider population and d on environmental topics.

After the workshops and training under the environmental campaign many more are in the process of environmental conservation back and new comic creators took their and engaged in stirring discussions another and read their comics to and family members. After taking also pasted on the walls of shops earnestly to the topics and issues that the comics stories invoked and they asked questions to better understand the issues. Since the comic stories were created by the students and youth themselves, the discussions unfolded very organically and our comic creators responded to all the queries in a professional manner.



उपवन का कमल



Name -> Karishma

Wonders of the Upvan: One day, Shubham went to Harit Upvan (Urban Forest), Sorkha. As he looked around and wondered about the beauty of the place, his father asked him if he knew that it was wasteland before. He got interested and asked his father how the wasteland turned into a forest. His father explained to him that it was a product of labour and skill and required many years to become this beautiful. Shubham also felt that the air was cleaner inside, and he asked his father if we grew more trees outside the Harit Upvan, would that change things outside too? His father replied in the affirmative and told him that trees give us food as well as fresh air.

30+ comic trainers trained

Comics downpour

Soon after the second grassroots comics workshop in October 2023, the children and youth of Sorkha started to make comics on their own with some guidance from the WCI team. During this time, many of the comic creators were also identified as potential trainers and were provided hand holding and comics-making skills. This innovative approach empowered them to initiate a collaborative journey, supporting and motivating each other and spearheading the environmental campaign.



Taking the message back to the community

sessions with the students' community of Sorkha in which more than 60 comics were created (and development), it was time to take the message of to the community! On 5th November 2023, our old comic stories back to their families and communities and talks with them. They went from one street to by-passers, shopkeepers, their neighbors, friends due permissions, some of the comic stories were and houses. People who were engaged responded

Since the comic stories were created by the students and youth themselves, the discussions unfolded very organically and our comic creators responded to all the queries in a professional manner.

TREE Foundation

T. A. Pugalarasan, Harit Champion



Photo: Tree Foundation

A. Pugalarasan, a dedicated artisanal fisherman from the Periya Neelankarai fishing village in Chennai, India, stands as an exemplary Harit Champion, driven by an unwavering commitment to ocean conservation and the safeguarding of sea turtles. His journey from a simple fisherman to the forefront of environmental stewardship is a testament to his remarkable dedication.

His passion for marine conservation was ignited when he crossed paths with Dr. Supraja Dharini of the Tree Foundation in 2002. Understanding the pivotal role sea turtles play in the health of our oceans, Pugalarasan embarked on a journey of action and tirelessly educated fellow fishermen about the perilous impact of certain fishing practices on these ancient creatures.

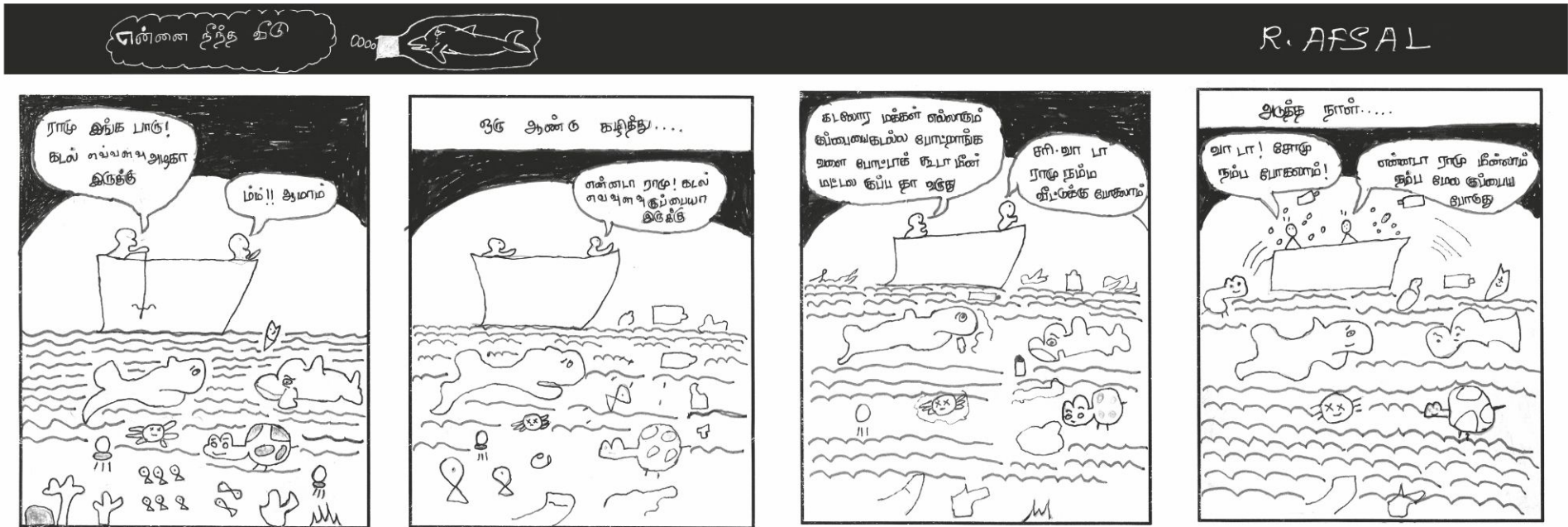
His legacy extends to a flourishing sea turtle hatchery in Neelankarai, where over 43,709 hatchlings have embarked on their journey to the open sea under his watchful eye. He braved late-night hours to rescue injured, stranded turtles, ensuring their rehabilitation was nurtured with care.



Photo: Tree Foundation

Pugalarasan’s leadership transcends borders, connecting with over 465 fishing villages as he champions marine conservation. His community-based programmes, insightful training sessions, and impactful beach clean-ups have created a network of informed stewards, spreading ocean awareness far and wide.

Rooted in his profound understanding of the ocean’s life-sustaining force, Pugalarasan tirelessly toils to safeguard delicate ecosystems. His actions epitomise the essence of a Harit Champion—knowledgeable, proactive, and deeply committed to nurturing a sustainable environment.



Let me swim – Two friends go out into the sea and are enchanted by its captivating beauty! They come back after a year to find it full of filth and garbage. Reflecting on the situation, one of them tells the other that this is the result of people throwing garbage into the sea. The next day, they find all the fish throwing garbage back at them as if pleading with humans to allow them to swim!

-R. Afsal

Humane Animal Society

Jeeva, Harit Champion

Right from his childhood, Jeeva had a special place in his heart for animals. But little did he know that his love for animals would one day lead him on a journey with the Humane Animal Society (HAS). Jeeva’s first encounter with HAS was not a mere coincidence; it was his calling. He went there to treat a rescued animal, but his conversations with Dr. Mini Vasudevan, the founder of HAS, drove him to make a life-altering decision—he left his job and dedicated himself fully to the cause of animal welfare. In 2019, he joined HAS as an animal handler in the ABC and Rescue Centre.

What sets Jeeva apart is his exceptional ability to connect with animals on an almost intuitive level. Jeeva’s journey is marked by countless rescues, each executed with a level of empathy that transcends the ordinary. His commitment has led him to undertake even the most daunting of rescues, from dogs to cows stranded on busy roads. It goes without saying that he is indeed the star animal handler at HAS.



Photo: HAS

When asked about what stands out for Jeeva in his journey with HAS, he says that HAS helped him understand the deep-rooted problems in breeding and how they contribute to rendering stray animals homeless. He’s become profoundly conscious of the cause of indie dogs. His journey has also led him to believe that all beings are equal, but animals, in fact, evoke more goodness in the world.

Finally, Jeeva’s commitment extends beyond his own actions. He is diligently sowing the seeds of compassion in the heart of his daughter, guiding her towards a life where empathy towards animals becomes second nature. In these efforts lies the possibility that one day she might carry forward his legacy, continuing the beautiful journey he embarked upon.



Photo: HAS

IN THIS ECOSYSTEM, CO-DEPENDENCE IS THE KEY



Tribals living in the forest are not a threat to the ecosystem, but they have preserved it for centuries

Joining hands to save the environment

On November 5, 2023, Thuvakkam organized a volunteer event at the urban forest in the Buckingham Canal stretch in Chennai. The volunteers and the Thuvakkam staff joined hands in planting trees and maintaining the urban forest, while educational sessions for the volunteers were also organized. In collaboration with the HCLFoundation and Greater Chennai Corporation, Thuvakkam has created an urban forest along the Buckingham Canal stretch, covering 32,000 sq. ft. with over 7,000 indigenous plants.



Photo: Thuvakkam

Harit Diwali with children



Photo: GEAG

Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group (GEAG), with support from HCLFoundation, celebrated 'Harit Diwali' at the Police Commissionerate, Gautam Buddh Nagar, Noida, on November 9. The focus was on educating children about eco-friendly Diwali practices. During the event, children decorated mud diyas, planted trees, and embraced the theme "One Plant, One Lamp." Informative sessions covering eco-friendly firecrackers, mindful electricity use, and homemade diyas were also held.

A step towards conserving mangrove ecosystem

A workshop was organized by Spandan, in collaboration with the HCLFoundation, on 9th November in the conference hall of Panthanivas at Puri involving the marine fisher community of Penthakotta and Tikina village of Puri. The workshop was organized on the importance of community participation in the conservation of mangrove ecosystems and coastal cleaning and was attended by 60 women SHG leaders. HCLFoundation has collaborated with Spandan to promote coastal conservation and eco-system management in Puri.



Photo: Spandan

Environmental Comics Campaign in Chennai

Under the Harit by HCLFoundation initiative, World Comics India (WCI) has been working extensively with different stakeholders to increase awareness and action on environmental issues. The months of November and December 2023 played a crucial role in the tremendous success of the campaign in Tamil Nadu.



After various sessions and exhibitions, a training of trainers (ToT) was held with OfERR on the 15th and 16th of November. The participants included OfERR's staff from Chennai, Erode, Madurai, Trichy, Vaniyaru, Perumanallur, Mettupatti, Sentharpatti, etc.

The TOT workshop served as a pivotal training ground for all the participants, now known as "trainers," equipping them with the necessary skills to extend the campaign's influence, followed by a follow-up workshop with the trainers on November 30. In the month of December, the campaign slowed down a little due to the cyclone Michaung but soon afterwards picked up pace and trainers began to organize small-scale workshop in small and big groups to spread the message of environmental conservation.



A noble initiative in Sorkha

The inauguration ceremony of the Library and English-Speaking Course at Harit Upvan, Sorkha, Noida, on January 14, 2023, was a momentous event organized by Give Me Trees Trust in collaboration with HCLFoundation. The occasion brought together people from nearby colonies and villages, united in their support for this noble cause. On the inaugural day, an impressive enrollment of 70 children from the community took place.



Photo: GMTT

Keeping the good work requires effort

Rejuvenating ponds is good for both the pond water and the community, including children and youth, as it motivates them to keep water commons clean. Here is a glimpse of the layering work being carried out on the pond in Village Beel Akbarpur. ActionAid Association is currently rejuvenating three ponds in Gautam Buddha Nagar, UP, with the support of the HCL Foundation. The ponds are in the villages of Gulaothi Khurd, Beel Akbarpur, and Khandera.



Photo: ActionAid

Craft session to highlight the importance of urban wildlife

On November 9, 2023, the Avian and Reptile Rehabilitation Centre (ARRC) hosted 10 HCL volunteers for a craft session on making headbands representing urban wildlife and ecosystem components like forests, mountains, trees, etc. The headbands will be used by ARRT to conduct awareness skits with local schoolchildren to highlight the importance of urban wildlife and ecosystem components in keeping away pollution, diseases, and other impacts from humans. The volunteers had a great time expressing their creativity, and some of them drew and painted animals themselves in their own artistic styles.



Photo: ARRC

About the publication

HCLFoundation and World Comics India's collaborative initiative 'Harit Khabar' is a monthly newspaper that aims to educate people on environmental issues and challenges and raise community participation towards the cause of the environment. This publication has been launched to provide a platform to various partner organizations working in collaboration with the HCLFoundation's distinct flagship programme Harit - The Green Initiative to showcase their work and accomplishments and also to create a network between them. Through Harit Khabar we aim to stir meaningful debates on critical issues concerning our environment and ecosystem, accessibility to environmental education and public participation in decision-making processes in the country.

About HCLFoundation

HCLFoundation delivers the corporate social responsibility agenda of HCLTech in India through its flagship programmes and special initiatives. It is a not-for-profit organisation that strives to contribute towards national and international development goals, bringing about lasting positive impact in the lives of people, through long-term sustainable programmes.

About World Comics India

Advancing Grassroots Comics as an alternate tool of communication to local communities, World Comics India has been continuously working for the past 20 years. Many successful mass campaigns have also been organized using this medium of communication.

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