

# World Wetlands Day Celebrations - 2012

Schools from across the Himalayas observed World Wetlands Day on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2012. Twenty-six schools from the state of Jammu & Kashmir, six schools from the state of Uttarakhand and one from Himachal Pradesh participated in different events to mark the day.

## Wetlands Day in Kashmir Valley



Govt. Middle School Botingoo, Sopore Distt. Baramulla

Hundred and sixty children and six teachers from three schools participated in Wetlands Day celebration at Govt. Middle School Botingoo, Sopore in Kashmir vally. The program was the first of its kind in the school and received enthusiastic response from children and adults alike. Children were apprised of the importance of wetlands for human existence, their role as carbon sinks and for maintaining the balance of ecosystems. They were also informed about the theme "Wetland Tourism: A Great experience. Responsible Tourism supports Wetlands and People" selected for the year 2012 and its relevance. Discussions were then directed towards local environmental problems, especially those related to the wetlands of the region, namely, the Wullar Lake, Hooker Sar, Indus River in Ladakh, Jkelum River, Manasbal Lake, Dal Lake and other water bodies of J&K. These natural resources, the lifelines of the region, are getting polluted and depleted due to anthropogenic activities such as encroachment and disposal of polythene bags, animal carcasses and untreated sewage in the water bodies.

In addition to discussions, the children participated in a drawing competition, speech competition and a rally, all reflecting the theme of 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2012. The event has significance in planting the seed of curiosity in over 160 children and their teachers.

## Wetlands Day in Jammu



Gharana Wetland Birding Fair

Over 500 children gathered to celebrate Wetlands Day at 'Gharana Wetland Birding Fair'. These students from one undergraduate college and eighteen school eco-clubs enjoyed a nature trail in the company of beautiful migratory birds. The students tried to identify the birds with the help of field guides and various experts. After the nature-walk, the students participated in a photography competition, a drawing competition and a story-writing competition. The experts from WWF – India J&K Office, the Wildlife Department J&K, and three environmental NGOs spoke on the need of proper management and conservation of Wetlands and the protection of migratory birds. At the end of the event, the students took out rally to share the message of wetland protection and conservation with the communities of adjoining villages.

The Gharana wetland is an internationally recognised wetland, rich in variety and diversity. It is home to migratory birds like the Bar-headed Geese, Grebes, Herons, Egrets, Cormorants, Storks, Ducks, Pintails, Teals, Coots, Vultures, Kites, Hens, Pigeons, Doves, and Parakeets etc. The wetland is a part of the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) and the thousands of Bar-headed geese are the main centre of attraction.

The event was organized by WWF-India, J&K Office.

## Wetlands Day in Uttarakhand



Tharu Govt. Inter-College, Khatima

Students from Tharu Govt. Inter-College, Khatima celebrated World Wetlands Day under the guidance of National Cadet Corps (N.C.C.) officers and the Principal of the school. The students and N.C.C. cadets were taken to a nearby village pond where they discussed the importance of such natural resources and the biodiversity present in the eco-system. Examples of different species of flora and fauna found in the area were also cited. The speakers emphasized on the role of wetlands and diverse species in the food chain and overall ecological balance. The Principal of the school stressed on environmental conservation, especially of the village ponds. He further motivated students to take necessary steps to educate other villagers in this direction. At the end, the students pledged to initiate the campaign and make every effort to create awareness related to conserving wetlands.



Junior High School, Satyakhal

Junior High School, Satyakhal, Pauri Garhwal, over 40 students, 10 teachers, 5 school staff and 25 members of the local community participated in the Wetlands Day celebration. They exchanged views and information about the importance of wetlands to maintain ecological balance, the function of wetlands in flood control, prevention of soil erosion, ground water recharge, retention, recovery and removal of excess nutrients and so on. The participants also discussed the utility of wetlands in their lives and listed various products and services that they obtain from wetlands, such as water, fish, fodder and medicinal plants. The children created placards with messages related to the theme of the day and took out a rally to create mass awareness about wetlands.

The celebration was organised by Institute for Development Support (IDS).



All concerned stakeholders ranging from government officials to NGO members to children to the local communities got involved in understanding the importance of Wetlands and discussing related issues in Himalayan states that are threatening the local waterbodies. These celebrations were organised under the banner of Paryavaran Mitra programme of Centre for Environment Education (CEE). Paryavaran Mitra (Friends of Environment), world's largest school based programme on climate change and sustainability education, supported by MoEF and ArcelorMittal, is reaching out to 2 million schools across India.