

World Wetlands Day 2013 Celebration

February 2, 2013, saw over 350 students, 80 volunteers, guests and teachers from around 16 schools participate in a host of activities organized by CEE Himalaya in collaboration with NGO partners under the banner of *Paryavaran Mitra* network and RCE Srinagar to observe 'World Wetlands Day' (WWD) in the Himalayan States of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The celebrations, held simultaneously at two locations, brought forth enthusiastic children onto public platforms to share their views and opinions about the WWD 2013 theme "Wetlands Take Care of Water".

The event at Uttarakhand was jointly by CEE Himalaya and local NGO AAGAAS Federation at D.A.V Inter College, Karanpur, Dehradun. Celebrated as exhibition-cum-orientation workshop, the event commenced with local experts explaining the concept of WWD and Ramsar Convention of 1971, citing examples of prominent wetlands of the State, describing the role of wetlands for migratory birds, spring and groundwater recharge, flood control, proliferation of native medicinal plants, livelihood services and tourism in the mountains. As many wetlands of Uttarakhand are home to over 140 species of migratory birds for 5-6 months every year, the audience was called to take immediate action to protect their local wetlands. High altitude wetlands, a unique feature of the mountains, were also discussed in great detail as these are water bodies of religious importance in addition to being water resources for rural livestock as well as unique wild faunal species. More emphasis was laid on the responsible tourism and wetland conservation initiatives as wetlands are said to be the kidneys of the Planet Earth. The children listened with rapt attention as they learnt about wetlands safeguarding their communities and local biodiversity. Some activities undertaken by them to express their view about wetlands included essay, drawing and slogan writing competitions for which prizes were awarded to the winners. Following these, the children were encouraged to paint their thoughts on large white banners that would serve as impromptu exhibition pieces toward the end of the program. A rally was also taken out by the children with their slogans, painting and pledges for conserving wetlands.



At Himachal Pradesh, the event was organized at Government Girls' High School, Bhangrotu, Mandi by CEE Himalaya and local NGO Ancient Herbal Waves. Students here learnt about natural, seasonal and artificial water resources of India, especially of Himachal Pradesh. They also discussed methods of preserving such resources. The children participated in a debate competition, a quiz and a skit on wetland conservation. At the end of the day, winners of each of the three activities were awarded prizes.



Like every other year, WWD was observed as a day of prime importance by young citizens of the Himalayan States. The events were successful in encouraging children to take up active roles in the protection of their local wetlands with many of them deciding to undertake action projects related to water conservation.