



WILD ORISSA

(An organization for conservation of nature and wildlife)

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GIVING FLIGHT TO YOUNG MINDS

MY SCHOOL MY BIRD

(a wild birds conservation program by 'Wild Orissa')

Today amazing details regarding birds are available in the public domain, including many stunning images by photographers who scour the countryside. It is without doubt that many persons from the youth segment have developed a very strong linkage with birds through bird watching and bird photography. We are also aware that with the pace of economic development in the country, much of the erstwhile rich bird habitats today face serious threats and many of them have become devoid of the feathered diversity. It is this which has been engaging the attention of 'Wild Orissa', an organization working in the field of wildlife conservation since 1996 in the state of Odisha. 'Wild Orissa' is one of the most active organizational partners under the Indian Bird Conservation Network and Important Bird Areas Program since 2000.

Can we somehow build a strong constituency for these wild birds? Can we provide a safe haven for them to procreate? Can we provide succour for them to survive in their most pristine natural habitats? Because survival of birds is today to be seen as the future for the survival of human race, not perhaps in the very immediate future but certainly in the years to come. The balance of life will indeed tilt if we allow natural habitats to be trodden over. Birds are surely an indicator of this balance, so delicately poised, that with multifarious factors impinging upon them on a rapid scale, there is now a real danger of the extinction of some species. We have lost many species over the decades not only globally but in India too. We are also aware that the list of threatened and endangered species continues to increase. Can we somehow reverse this trend? Perhaps if we join hands we can, and by engaging with wildlife organizations, schools, children, youth, government, etc. we surely can!

'Wild Orissa' is launching another ambitious bird conservation initiative 'GIVING FLIGHT TO YOUNG MINDS- MY SCHOOL MY BIRD' this year under its Wild Birds Conservation Program. The state of Odisha has in excess of 540 species of birds. This initiative will involve identifying one species of bird with one school, organizing interactive sessions with students on the said species, its natural habitat, its conservation status and requirements, etc. Our focus will be on forest fringe areas and rural areas of Odisha. We will be sourcing high resolution photographs from photographers and bird lovers of the state who will like to share their images for this conservation initiative. Each of these schools will be evaluated as to what initiatives they would have taken during the course of a 6 months period, upon which Wild Orissa will be organizing an interactive session for selected schools from a district. By doing this we will endeavour to link birds with their ecology and their habitats, enabling children to appreciate the need for natural habitat conservation and all that goes with it. Special emphasis will be laid upon rare and endangered bird species in Odisha. We are

considering engaging with schools located in the districts of Khurda, Nayagarh, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Puri, Dhenkanal, Angul, Cuttack, Bhadrak, Jajpur, and Ganjam in Odisha spread over a period of one year.

In light of the above Wild Orissa organized the state level launch for this program on the 17th of October 2014 at Jayadev Bhavan Bhubaneswar. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Odisha Shri S.S. Srivastava I.F.S. was Chief Guest and launched this event. Eminent ornithologist Dr. Uday Narayan Dev, Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Shri H.S. Bist I.F.S., representatives from Wildlife Society of Orissa, Nature and Wildlife Conservation Society of Orissa, Ruchika Social Service Organisation, and were present. Bird lovers from Birds of Orissa and Kalinga Birds groups were present. From Wild Orissa Shri Krushna Chandra Swain Chairman, Shri Nanda Kishore Bhujabal Vice Chairman, Shri Kulamani Deo Chief Spokesperson, Shri Akash Ranjan Rath Governor Puri Regional Chapter, Shri Dilip Kumar Nayak MSMB Program Coordinator, Shri Chinmaya Bhujabal and Shri Bira Kishore Bhujabal, etc. were present.

Subsequent to the state level launch, district level launches in the districts specified in the above paragraphs will be organized. In this apart from school authorities, youth, organizations engaged in wildlife conservation in district level, government, etc. will be associated.

‘Wild Orissa’ will be closely working with various schools across the state of Odisha, wildlife and forest department officials from Odisha, wildlife conservation groups, press and media and bird lovers in Odisha in the implementation stage which is being slated to start from November 2014. A total of 400 schools are being aimed to be targeted under this conservation program. Areas outside the ‘protected areas’ will be targeted. Selection of a bird species for a particular school will be done basing on well laid down criteria. There will be standard operating procedures adopted for all districts and schools which will include processes that ensure maximal engagement of school children in bird observation, bird notings, bird discussions, etc. for the particular species earmarked. Subsequently a robust evaluation mechanism will be put in place involving externals. An incentivized approach will be adopted during the feedback and evaluation stage.

By executing this ambitious bird conservation program in the state of Odisha the following benefits are expected to accrue:-

1. Children will develop empathy for birds
2. Children will develop interest in observing bird behaviour and study their life cycles
3. Children will understand the various problems which are impediments on birds and bird habitats
4. Children will appreciate the deleterious changes due to certain economic development
5. Children will understand the need for saving and protecting bird habitats
6. Children will understand the need for linking conservation of bird habitats with ecological balance of space occupied by humans

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Secretary
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