



Little warriors join frog fight

Around a hundred students from around eight schools attended the Save The Frogs World Summit, held in association with the WISH Foundation, at the MP Birla Planetarium Seminar Hall

Remember the time when the monsoon nights were accompanied by the croaking of a frog on the wet streets? Those days have become a rarity now, pointing to the rapid decline in the number of frogs. Indeed, nearly a third of over 6,963 species of frogs and toads are threatened with extinction, requiring our immediate attention.

Save The Frogs, a leading amphibian conservation organisation which has been around for 10 years with a record of over 2,000 environmental educational events across 57 countries, gave out this important message at the Save The Frogs World Summit, held for the first time in Calcutta. The event was held at the MP Birla Planetarium Seminar Hall, in association with the WISH foundation, an NGO based out of Calcutta, working dedicatedly towards raising environmental awareness.

Around a hundred keen students from eight schools attended the summit. It started with a fun, interactive and informative session where Kerry M. Kriger, a conservation biologist and the founder and executive director of Save The Frogs, with assistance from Sarbani Deb, secretary of WISH foundation, presented some interesting facts about frogs, such as that amphibians, including frogs, need wet places to survive, the differences between a frog and a toad and between a newt and a salamander, how a tadpole transforms into a frog, and that toads have poison to protect themselves.

Thereafter, the students were engaged in a simple question-answer round where they were asked some fundamental questions about frogs. They gave impressive answers and their curiosity to learn more about frogs was clearly visible.

The students were also shown pictures of different types of frogs like the Pacific Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris regilla*), Giant Squeaker Frog (*Arthroleptis krokosua*), the critically endangered *Phylllobates terribilis*, Parque Explora, Medellin, Colombia and many others. The fact that around 2,000 amphibian species are threatened with extinction and that around 200 frog species have



Students of Rahara Nibedita Art School crafted several items, including cute and colourful paper frogs, paintings and a painted umbrella as part of the programme to raise awareness on frogs



gone extinct since 1979 were brought to light.

The possible reasons behind the alarming rate of frog extinction, such as habitat destruction, pollution due to industrial waste, frogs being eaten or taken out of wild as pets and the possible solutions, including the use of rechargeable batteries, driving slow on rainy nights, planting trees in the backyard of our homes, were discussed with the bunch of frog enthusiasts.

Kriger also shared details of some inspiring initiatives taken by students of schools such as Sea View Elementary School, Salton City, CA, campaigns by the Soccer Team in Chiana, Ghana, tree plan-

tation for the Giant Squeaker Frogs, Save the Frogs Day celebrated in Washington DC, Vancouver, Santa Cruz, Tampa, Russia.

The students were also encouraged to celebrate the last Saturday of April as Save The Frogs Day.

The next speaker, Karthikeyan Vasudevan, who is a scientist at the CSIR Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, showed a half-hour film titled *On The Brink*, featuring himself along with his two students, wandering through the forests of the Anamalai Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu, in the Western Ghats, in their quest to find the endangered purple frog (*Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis*), which

evolved 130 million years ago when Pangea split into Laurasia in the north and Gondwana in the south. purple frogs are now mostly found only in Kerala and Tamil Nadu and spend most of their life underground.

After this film, there was an interesting call-recognition session in which the students were told to identify the different amphibians from their sounds. The students eagerly participated in it.

This was followed by a short quiz on the whole session wherein students were split into three groups with names such as purple frog, Indian bull frog, and tree frog and were asked questions about



Karthikeyan Vasudevan, scientist at the CSIR Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, shows the half-hour film, *On The Brink*. The film discussed how habitat destruction and the deadly amphibian disease, chytridiomycosis, are two of the main reasons behind the rapid extinction of the purple frog. "I think interactions like these where we share our practical knowledge with the young students, who are always shielded from real-life problems, can help them a lot to open up their minds to new horizons. In reality, by saving this species, we are trying to better understand how we can save ourselves because the same threats that affect the amphibians affect us, too. If we find a solution to their problems, we will benefit, too," he said.

whatever they had learnt in the seminar.

The seminar ended with a brief art session in which the students of Rahara Nibedita Art School made some stunning frog paintings and craftwork.

Another highlight of the workshop was the frog-styled jewellery handcrafted by the marginal communities of Dulagar, West Bengal, which were up for sale outside the seminar hall. The sale proceeds went to the villagers. The objective was to remind the people of the importance of frogs through the ornaments they wear.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11 ►

► FROM PAGE 10



Kerry Kriger shared an inspiring story of some girls in California, the US, who sent letters to the governor of California and thereby helped lay the foundation of a law to save the California red-legged frog



The students of Rahara Nibedita Art School painted and crafted items as Kerry Kriger played some soft tunes on a flute, thereby sharing one of his many talents with the young ones. Hritambhara Sanyal (right in picture below) and Priyanka Swain (left in picture below), Class V students of St Augustine's Day School and also learning art at Rahara Nibedita Art School, were among the many kids who posed with the paintings. "If we do not save frogs, there will be more insects," said Hritambhara, who made a frog mask and a painting.



We have been doing this workshop since 2008, as we are strong supporters of Save The Frogs' ideology and activities. All the artwork created by our students were made out of waste.

— **Apurba Banerjee**, Principal, Rahara Nibedita Art School



In India, there is very little awareness about frogs and how spectacular the amphibian species are in general. Workshops such as these give a detailed understanding of frogs, which students usually don't get at school

— **Ashwika Kapur**, wildlife filmmaker and photographer



I think we can involve more people in spreading awareness about the danger facing frogs by signing petitions online, and going on frog-watching tours like we go on bird-watching tours.

— **Aarshi Jain**, IBDP Year 2, The Heritage School



The workshop was fun as well as informative. The concept of protecting frogs inspires me. I will try my best to spread awareness about this problem among my friends, as the first step towards making the world a better place for frogs.

— **Tanish Kejriwal**, Class XI, The Heritage School



The seminar was very informative. My classmates and I have already started discussing if we can set up a small pool as we were told in the seminar, to maintain the natural habitat of frogs and help conserve them.

— **Aryan Banerjee**, Class XI, The Heritage School



So many species are facing the threat of extinction. Frogs are just one of them, which this seminar focussed on. I think small actions like these can make a huge impact in spreading awareness about the current environmental issues.

— **Chandni Raghani**, IBDP Year 1, The Heritage School



We told the students to come with a blank mind, as we wanted to inform them about frogs from scratch. Currently, our foundation is working towards community sensitisation and environmental awareness to engage city people in the conservation of nature.

— **Sarbani Deb**, Secretary of WISH Foundation

