

ART FOR CONSERVATION & CLIMATE CRISIS (A4C)

Art is an extremely powerful medium that has the deep strength to communicate social and environmental issues effectively and influence an audience.

Understanding this, Zoo Outreach Organisation launched the Art for Conservation and Climate Crisis (A4C) project on 1 September 2023 with support from the U.S. Consulate General, Chennai to communicate the interconnected global problems of climate crisis and species loss that is destabilising human lives everywhere!

To achieve this vision we collaborated with expert/experienced artists (Stephen and Luci Nash for Illustrative art; Sunita & Chetan Shetty and Peter V. & Audre for Storytelling; Dharanidharan for Performing arts (theatre)) to build and train budding artists through workshops.



Through these workshops, the idea was for artists to create effective artworks based on sound science that will create awareness and encourage wildlife conservation and climate action to bring people from various streams and demographics into the fold to amplify impact. The final culmination will be an exhibition of all these artworks and bringing together other wildlife artists. Let's take a quick look at the workshops and what everyone learnt there:



Stephen D. Nash & Luci Betti-Nash at the A4C illustrative art workshop.

Storytelling for Wildlife Conservation and Climate Crisis

The Storytelling Workshop on Art for Wildlife Conservation and Climate Crisis was held on 21–23 April 2024 at Mani Mahal. The workshop aimed to explore nuances of storytelling to raise awareness, inspire action, and foster empathy towards wildlife conservation and addressing the climate crisis.

Workshop activities and discussions:

Tools of techniques of storytelling were taught across the three days and every evening had a story telling session be the mentors for the trainers to observe and learn from practically. The different tools and techniques include the basics parts of a story and types of stories that can be told to specific target audiences to create awareness, open up points of discussions and encourage action.

Participants were educated on the importance of wildlife conservation and the urgency of climate action.



Peter narrating a story at the A4C storytelling workshop.

The participants explored and practiced different forms of storytelling for different target audiences from children to adults in conveying messages effectively.

Participants were empowered to create impactful narratives that create awareness regarding wildlife conservation and climate crisis to inspire change.

The Zooreach team gave an overview of current challenges to wildlife and actions that are perpetuating the climate crisis. Case studies highlighting the impact of climate change on wildlife habitats and species were discussed along with how art of storytelling can transcend barriers and evoke emotional responses.

Examples of successful campaigns and projects using art for conservation were also a part of these discussions. Crafting narratives that connect with audiences were taught to the participants.

Participants formed groups to analyse stories and recognise relevant characters and plots. Mentors provided guidance on this aspect and encouraged them to develop their own stories that the participants narrated on the last day. Participants gained a deeper understanding of conservation challenges and climate impacts. Attendees explored their creative potential through hands-on activities.

In essence, the Storytelling Workshop on Art for Wildlife Conservation and Climate Crisis was a resounding success, fostering creativity and advocacy among participants while highlighting the critical role of storytelling.

Illustrative Art for Conservation

The workshop on Illustrative Art for Conservation was held on 25–27 April at Mani Mahal with the aim of exploring the intersection of art and conservation efforts. The event brought together artists,

conservationists, and enthusiasts to discuss and demonstrate how illustrative art can contribute to raising awareness, educating the public, and advocating for conservation and climate crisis issues.

Workshop activities and discussions:

The first day started with an ice breaking session of the artists being divided into pairs and drawing each other and highlighted historical examples and modern trends where art has played a pivotal role in influencing conservation efforts through presentations and discussions. Stephen and Luci emphasized the power of visual storytelling and its ability to evoke emotions and drive action. Participants engaged in hands-on sessions focusing on various techniques such as sketching, watercolor, digital illustration, traditional ink, and collage. The tutors demonstrated how each technique can be used effectively to depict wildlife, ecosystems, and environmental challenges.

Luci demonstrating the art of illustration to the participants.



There was a session that showcased real-world examples where illustrative art has made a tangible impact on conservation initiatives. Case studies included campaigns to protect endangered species, raise awareness about habitat destruction, and promote sustainable practices. Such as the Amche Mollem campaign that has been instrumental to draw attention and action to protect the Mollem National Park in Goa from detrimental development projects.

The discussion explored topics connected to conservation and climate crisis such as creating awareness on the importance of native species vs. non-native/invasive species, human-wildlife coexistence, ecological interactions, importance of sustainability, bringing to light lesser-known species, impacts of climate crisis, and habitat restoration among other things. There were also discussions on the importance of mediums and styles that can be used to reach specific target audiences.

Opportunities and challenges in collaborative projects between artists and conservation organizations, and how to effectively communicate scientific information through art were discussed.

The workshop concluded with a renewed commitment among participants to leverage illustrative art as a powerful tool for conservation advocacy.

Attendees left with enhanced skills, new connections, and a shared enthusiasm for using art to protect our natural world.

This report captures the essence of the workshop and its impact on the participants and the broader community interested in the intersection of art and conservation.

Theatre Workshop on Wildlife Conservation and Mitigating Climate Crisis

The Theatre Workshop on Wildlife Conservation and Mitigating Climate Crisis took place on 29 April-01 May at Mani Mahal. This workshop aimed to harness the power of theatre as a transformative tool for raising awareness about wildlife conservation and addressing the urgent challenges posed by the climate crisis.

Dharanidharan in an animated pose during the A4C performance art workshop.



Workshop activities and discussions:

The workshop involved many exercises starting with one on keeping a neutral expression and its importance in theatre. The workshop progressed to include understanding spaces and use of the space provided in order to be able to adapt to different regions and audiences.

The expert and participants used wildlife and community based themes for all the exercises. The participants were taught the role of music and singing along with performance in the style of theatre via street plays. As part of this they were also taught to address audiences that are present all around and keep the audience engaged.

The workshop sessions divided the participants into groups and each group was asked to create a pose as in a photograph to showcase human-elephant co-existence.

While other participants were asked to understand the different roles. This exercise taught the participants about how a diverse audience from different states and cultures perceive their role and whether it communicated what each group was hoping to. These exercises were followed by spells of long science and evidence-base discussions on human-elephant coexistence and other challenges faced by wildlife in India and the climate crisis.

The workshop concluded with participants developing a script for a short 5-10 minute play on the same topic (human-elephant coexistence) and enacting it without any dialogues.

The expert gave comments on each group's presentation and question and answer sessions were held on the doubts of the participants. A final discussion on the threats facing wildlife in India and aspects of climate crisis were discussed.

Dharanidharan explaining some techniques of theatrics.



In summary, the Theatre Workshop on Wildlife Conservation and Mitigating Climate Crisis successfully utilized theatre as a dynamic platform for promoting environmental awareness and advocacy, empowering participants to become agents of change through their artistic endeavours.

Workshop feedback:

Most participants have provided positive feedback with some comments on the need for a longer workshop and more hands-on training.

Participants left the workshop with plans and ideas reflecting their interpretations of conservation themes discussed.

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Priyanka Iyer, Zoo Outreach Organisation , Coimbatore.



Group photo of the A4C theatre workshop.