

Damagundam Mana Vanam: A Campaign to Save Our Forests

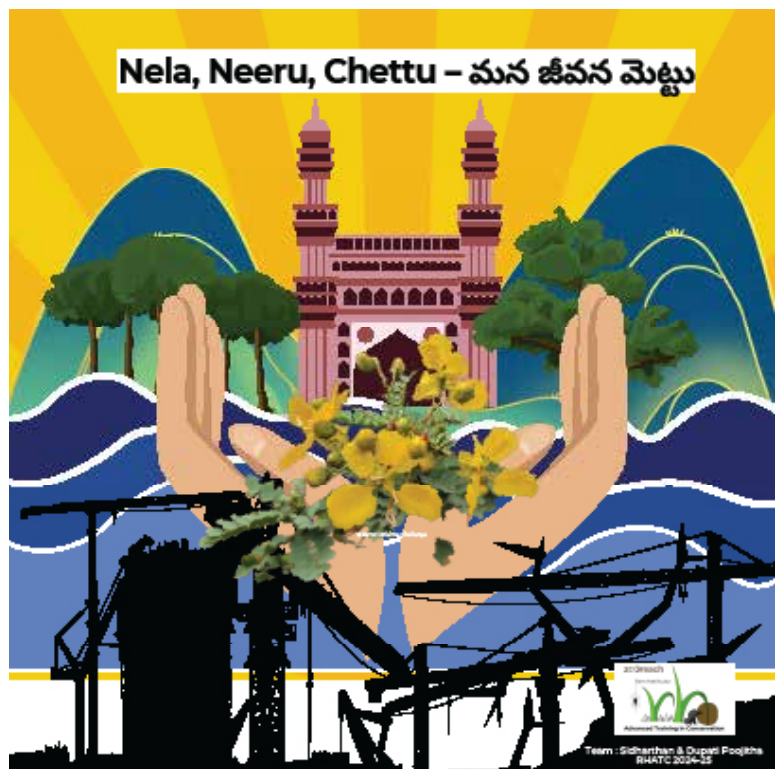
Sidharthan and Dupati Poojitha

As part of the Ram Hattikudur Advanced Training in Conservation (RHATC), organized by the Zoo Outreach Organisation, a workshop on conservation campaigns was conducted for the fellows. The workshop aimed to equip participants with skills to design and execute effective conservation initiatives. During this session we were tasked with identifying a pressing conservation issue, develop a campaign strategy to address it, and present our plan. Fellows Dupati Poojitha and Sidharthan teamed up and started thinking about pressing issues in India. And finally, we decided to go with the Damagundam Reserve Forest in Telangana.

Context of the Campaign

The Damagundam RF is an ecological hotspot, rich in biodiversity and vital to local communities for its natural resources and cultural significance. However, this forest has been under threat due to developmental pressures, primarily due to the construction of a very low frequency (VLF) radar station by the Indian Navy.

The proposal for diverting 1,174 hectares of forest land for this project dates back to 2008. Over the years, various approvals and compliance stages were completed, culminating in a foundation stone laid in early 2024. Despite financial allocations for afforestation and compensatory measures, no substantial efforts to protect or restore the forest have been implemented.



The Situation That Inspired the Campaign

In October 2024, as the development plans gained momentum, concerns were raised about the irreversible damage that deforestation would cause.

- ▶ **Environmental Impact:** The loss of habitat for endemic species, soil erosion, and disruption of local hydrological cycles.
- ▶ **Community Concerns:** The livelihoods of local residents, who depend on the forest for resources and cultural identity, were at stake.

- ▶ **Government Inaction:** Despite approvals and funds allocated for afforestation, there was little progress in addressing the ecological damage or involving the local population in decision-making.

Faced with these challenges, the idea for the Damagundam Mana Vanam campaign emerged. Recognizing the urgent need for grassroots action, we designed the campaign to build awareness, foster community involvement, and advocate for the forest's protection.

REVIVING THE GLOW


Diya Banerjee & Gupta Priya

The following campaign action plan was developed as part of group exercise assigned during our sessions with campaign strategist Cara Tejpal.

Protecting fireflies is essential for maintaining a healthy ecosystem, as they are natural invertebrate predators and pollinators. Their mesmerizing glow inspires cultural and ecological awareness, but their decline due to light pollution and pesticide use signals broader environmental issues. Therefore, we chose to work on an awareness campaign titled “Reviving the glow: an initiative for firefly conservation” to raise awareness, promote firefly-friendly practices, and encourage sustainable farming methods. By protecting fireflies, we support biodiversity, improve agricultural outcomes, and preserve a natural wonder for future generations, fostering a deeper connection between communities and nature.

REVIVING THE GLOW: AN INITIATIVE FOR FIREFLY CONSERVATION

Name _____ Date _____



Fireflies


➤ What is a firefly? What else are fireflies called?


➤ What is special about a firefly?

➤ Why do fireflies produce light?

➤ Are you familiar with the concept of organic farming? If yes, have you ever used it?

➤ Do you know that fireflies play a role in natural pest control?





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