

ZOO'S PRINT

Communicating Science for Conservation

SPECIAL ISSUE

**ART FOR
CONSERVATION
& CLIMATE
CRISIS**

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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.

These artworks will be displayed/ presented in the exhibition at the venue, allowing attendees to appreciate the diverse perspectives and creative expressions inspired by the workshop and encouraging action towards climate crisis mitigation.

These artworks will be displayed/ presented in the exhibition at the venue, allowing attendees to appreciate the diverse perspectives and creative expressions inspired by the workshop and encouraging action towards climate crisis mitigation. All the participants from the three workshops also conducted outreach programs after the workshop in their hometowns to spread the word about wildlife conservation and climate crisis, and some of them also highlighted their learnings from the workshops. These outreach programs, featured in this special issue of Zoo's Print magazine, have further amplified the reach of this project.

Priyanka Iyer, Zoo Outreach Organisation , Coimbatore.



Group photo of the A4C theatre workshop.

SKETCHING SOLUTIONS:

Art Tackles Climate Change

STEPHEN D. NASH & LUCI BETTI-NASH
STONY BROOK, NY, USA

At the invitation of our long-time friends Sanjay and Payal Molur, their daughter Elakshi, and the dynamic team at Zooreach, in April of this year we traveled to India for the first time. It was certainly a wonderful opportunity in itself, but additionally, we were asked to participate in one of an ambitious series of workshops devoted to the use of Art in the understanding and conservation of Nature, specifically to address the challenge of Climate Change, which is disproportionately affecting tropical countries, including India. Indeed, while we were there, the region of Tamil Nadu was experiencing record high temperatures.

Alongside other meetings concerned with Theatre and Story-telling, and their own potential role in conservation education, we ran the 3-day Illustration course, held in the Mani Mahal Building in downtown Coimbatore. The Workshops were financially supported in by the US Consulate General in Chennai.

We were also privileged to sit in for one day on the Story-telling workshop which opened our eyes (and ears) to the world of aural verbal communication, which we in the West often overlook as a powerful tool for promoting conservation.

Participants were encouraged to return home afterwards, and organize and run their own workshops, with the ultimate



goal of establishing a network of conservation educators across India, sharing experiences, techniques and innovations. They were also to prepare a finished piece of work for inclusion in an exhibition to be held in Coimbatore six months after the workshop.

The Illustration course had actually begun weeks before we arrived, with our assembly and emailing to the selected workshop participants of miscellaneous reference materials and examples of rendering techniques employed in the various fields of scientific illustration.

We also participated in the ordering and purchase of supplies, and decided to concentrate upon a few basic media - graphite pencil (tone), pen and ink (line), watercolor, colored pencil, and mixed media.

The monochrome media were included partly to address economic issues: printing costs are vastly different for black-and-white versus color, even today. For participants who came from areas of the country where printing costs are high, then monochrome printing of conservation education materials is preferred.

Our prior experiences with running similar workshops, in Peru and Brazil, had prepared us to make careful use of the limited time available.

The first day of the Workshop consisted of introductions: to each other, to the course structure and goals, and to the vast field of the visual interpretation of science, which includes biological, technical, medical, botanical, forensic, entomological and archaeological illustration. Participants were from various parts of India, and from a multiplicity of biologically diverse, ethnic, cultural and economic backgrounds.

The first project, the production of sketched portraits of fellow-attendees, served to underline the collaborative nature of these workshops: no matter our circumstances, our geographical origin, and our individual skills, it is important, if not vital, to appreciate that we are all working together to address the challenge of climate change, which is the primary issue facing humanity today, and which will determine our future as a species, and as earthlings.

The subsequent meetings were dedicated to the history and demonstration of classical rendering techniques and their reproduction, and the realities of working as a freelance or institutional scientific illustrator, interacting with scientists, and acting, effectively, as intermediary and interpreter between the world of the researcher and that of the general public.

To our surprise, the strongest positive response to the introductions to the various media was to pen-and-ink, which some might consider to be rather archaic, but which, with the increasing popularity of Manga and the Graphic Novel as a format, and with its almost century-long links to American comic books, has actually become very convenient and economical.

Reducing everything in a picture to just black and white is a considerable artistic and intellectual challenge, but if successful, the sparse nature of pen and ink drawings invite the viewer to mentally “fill in” the missing details, resulting in a bond between artist and observer and an influence potentially stronger than when photo-realistic techniques are used. In a classroom situation, line drawings can be hand-colored by children, thereby making the lesson more memorable.

The importance of sequential art as a way to convey information also cannot be understated.

Nash, S.D. (2008). Some thoughts and reflections on the use of illustration in Biodiversity Education Campaigns. *Journal of Threatened Taxa* 1(1): 119–125.

Some of the oldest surviving artwork is sequential art, including the imagery on Hadrian’s Column, and arguably, on many petroglyphs created by indigenous artists around the world (See Nash 2008).

The Workshop students were a total delight: motivated, resourceful and eager to learn, their stories were very varied. Some were employed in research institutions, while others were at different points in their further education studies, and some were freelance illustrators.

Each had their own passions and were very willing to express their concerns about climate change, wildlife conservation and the environment. It was all very encouraging.

We hope we were able to aid them by recounting some experiences from our own careers.



REDISCOVERING NATURE THROUGH SKETCHES

Earlier this year, when Luci and Stephen invited a bunch of us to an extraordinary journey of observational enquiry on nature at the 'Art for Conservation' (A4C) workshop organised by the Zoo Outreach Organisation, the awe-struck researcher and artist in me discovered that one connecting link between a scientist and an artist - *the power of observation and enquiry*. And I couldn't help but reflect back on the years of marvelling at the polymath Da Vinci's unparalleled observation skills and his incessant wonder for all that is around and within - something that has driven me personally in all my creative pursuits. Naturally, when it came to taking the lessons of the workshop to more nature and art enthusiasts, I knew exactly what to offer.

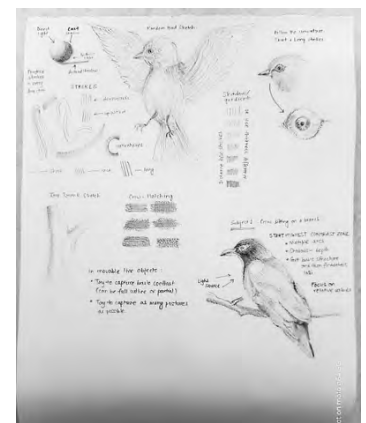
On 18 August, a Sunday morning, a group of Indian Institute of Science students and community members came together for a Nature Art Workshop, themed around observational enquiry, grounding, and connection, organised in collaboration with the Nature Club of IISc. We kickstarted by setting the intention for the day, some eager to explore their creativity, others to immerse





themselves in nature, yet others seeking a live outdoor sketching community and for me, the joy of reconnecting with the green campus of my alma mater. As the facilitator, I was both inspired and deeply moved by the experience. The day was filled with vibrant energy as we explored the play of light and shadow to capture the essence of patterns and textures in nature art.

From the few seasoned sketchers to numerous curious beginners, the workshop witnessed a diverse group of passionate individuals, each with their unique perspectives, discovering the magic of intentional observation as they forged a deeper connection with the campus biodiversity through their live nature art creations.





The highlight of the day, a collaborative exploration of the nature observations from campus, saw them turn a barren stretch of 10–15 m canvas into a *vibrant and thriving biodiverse wonder*. The transformative power of this shared experience was evident in the joyful smiles etched across the faces of participants deeply immersed in the flow state of creation.

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, or allowed them to refine their craft through the sketch along sessions and real-time with several attendees expressing how it reignited their passion for nature art or introduced them to new live art techniques or allowed them to refine their craft through the sketch along sessions and real-time

feedback during the outdoor sketching session. Looking ahead, participants expressed a keen interest in future workshops focusing on more in-depth explorations of artistic techniques and group outdoor nature art sessions.

The hands-on nature of these activities fostered a deeper appreciation for the environment, reinforcing the essential link between art, nature, and conservation. Together, we will continue to observe, explore, create, and conserve, one sketch at a time!

Sambita Modak, Independent Science Communicator-Educator-Researcher, Creature Conserve Mentor and Artist in Residency Scholar, Bangalore, Karnataka.



At Cubbon Park, Bangalore

THE NATURE WALK

On 7 September 2024, I conducted a workshop, as part of my training received from 'Art for Conservation' workshop by Zoo Outreach Organisation, to more than 20 people across different age groups at Cubbon Park, Bangalore. The workshop began with an introduction on the growing importance of using art to communicate the need for conservation, particularly as access to nature in urban spaces is diminishing. Art plays a vital role in communicating the beauty and fragility of the environment, making it an essential tool for raising awareness about conservation.

**Megha A Kashyap, Designer and Illustrator,
Kadirenahalli, Padmanabhanagar,
Banashankari II State, Bangalore, Karnataka**



The group was taken for a nature walk to observe the local ecology, photograph and to collect objects that inspired them. This hands-on approach allowed the participants to engage more deeply with their surroundings, noticing small details that might otherwise go unnoticed in the fast pace of city life.

Afterward, everyone gathered in circles to explore various drawing techniques. Some participants focused on capturing the way light interacted with leaves, an element they hadn't considered before when drawing from photos. This direct observation helped bring new depth to their artwork.





Others chose to take a more abstract route, exploring shapes and forms without the need for realism. The diversity in artistic approaches emphasized the many ways in which nature can be interpreted and communicated through art.

I thank all my participants, Janhavi Shetty, Likhita, Shreya Abhyankar, Rose, Parita Desai, Anusha Sharma, Anu Thomas, Swapna, Farhat Shaukat, Abhilasha, Saneya, Shruti Abhyankar, Anagha Desai, Aditya, Surabhi, Sunidhi, Sahana, Deepak, Tazeen Ismail, Sai Adhye, Pooja Shetty for making this workshop a great learning experience.

WORKSHOP REFLECTION - ART, MARINE CONSERVATION, AND MY SCHOOL

I conducted an art workshop with the students of class 6C in my school, CS Academy, Kovaipudur. This was part of my pledge after attending the 'Art for Conservation' (A4C) Workshop run by Zooreach and the US Consulate, Chennai, in May 2024. My plan was to raise awareness on the pressing issues to marine ecosystems and how they have been severely impacted by bycatch and overfishing. I used an illustrative comic I made on this problem as a presentation interspersed with photographs of what is really happening on the coast. The reason I had listened to a talk by the Zooreach team and given my love for marine animals like Manta Rays and Jellyfish felt inspired to raise awareness on the topic.

Initially, I felt rather scared and the fact that there were all these young, bright, creative minds that looked up at me as I entered the room was rather intimidating. However, this thought was instantly extinguished by the flames of desire and determination I felt to inspire them, make a difference and open their minds to as many new things as possible. So I dove right in and got straight into explaining the issue to the very best of my



ability and the joy I felt in sharing the love for art and animals and slowly observing as the coils at the back of their brain started turning as they began to comprehend the graveness of the situation was truly immense and extremely exhilarating.

The experience opened up a whole new world for me—the world of teaching—and the thought of me having been on the other side of the classroom for the first time still leaves me in awe. The kids got to work, their motivation unwavering and remarkable. I split them up into four groups giving each one of them a separate species as such:

1. Fishermen - Their goal was to feed their families and be able to earn a living, and do so by any and all means possible whether that be harmful and illegal or not.

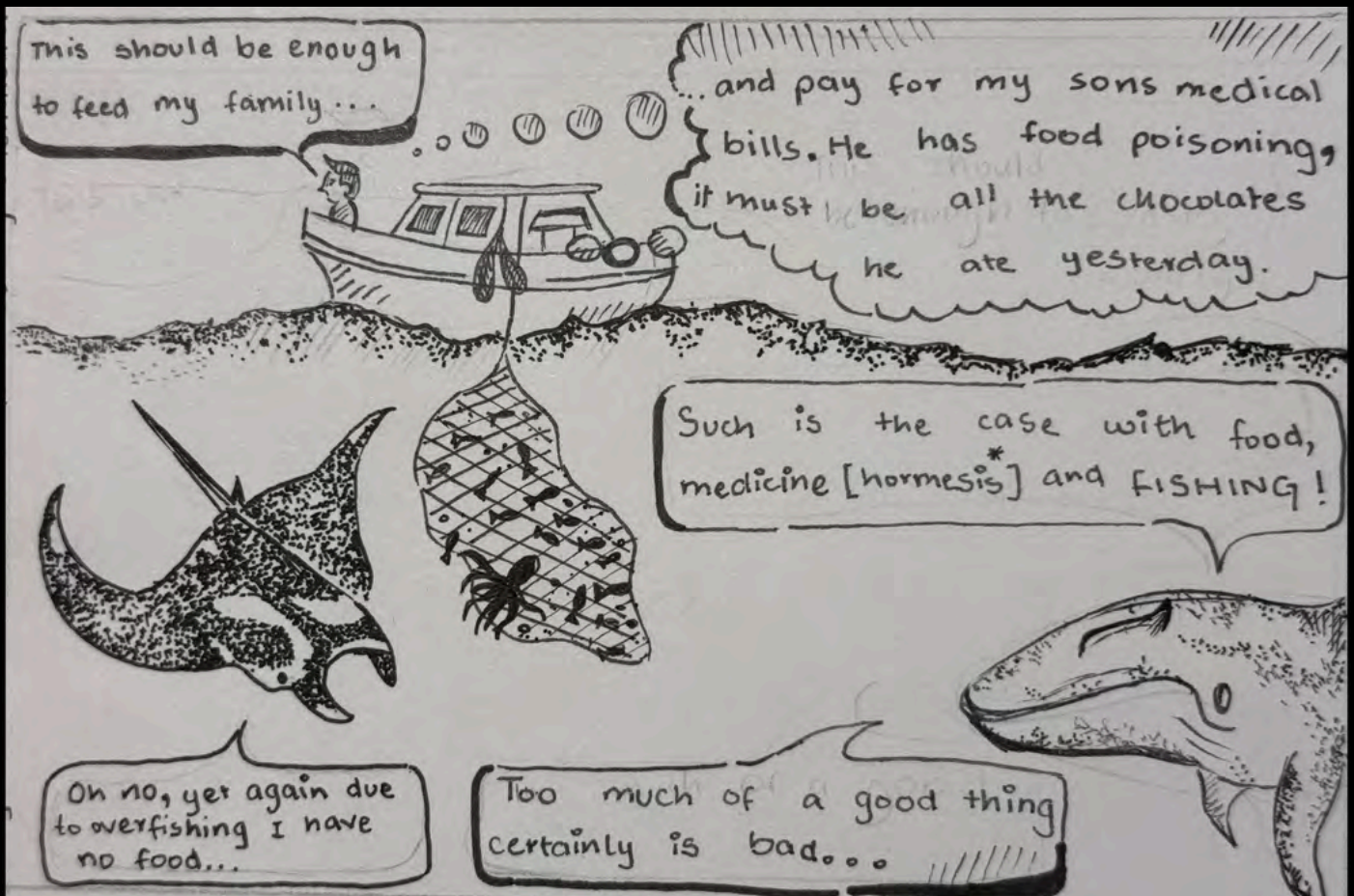
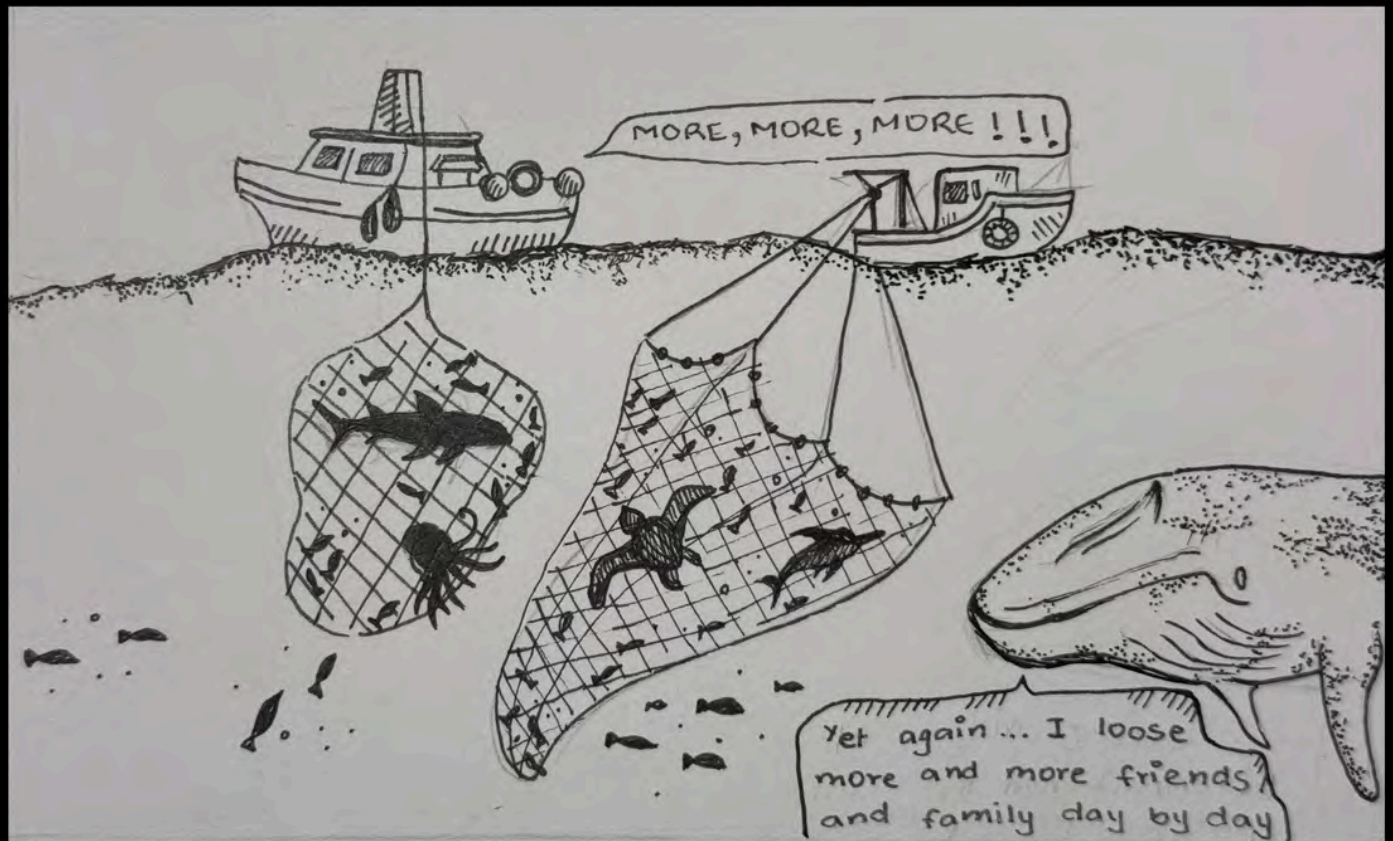
2. Coral reef - The members of this team were tasked with maintaining unity and providing shelter to all their marine inhabitants without being scooped up and destroyed by bottom trawlers.

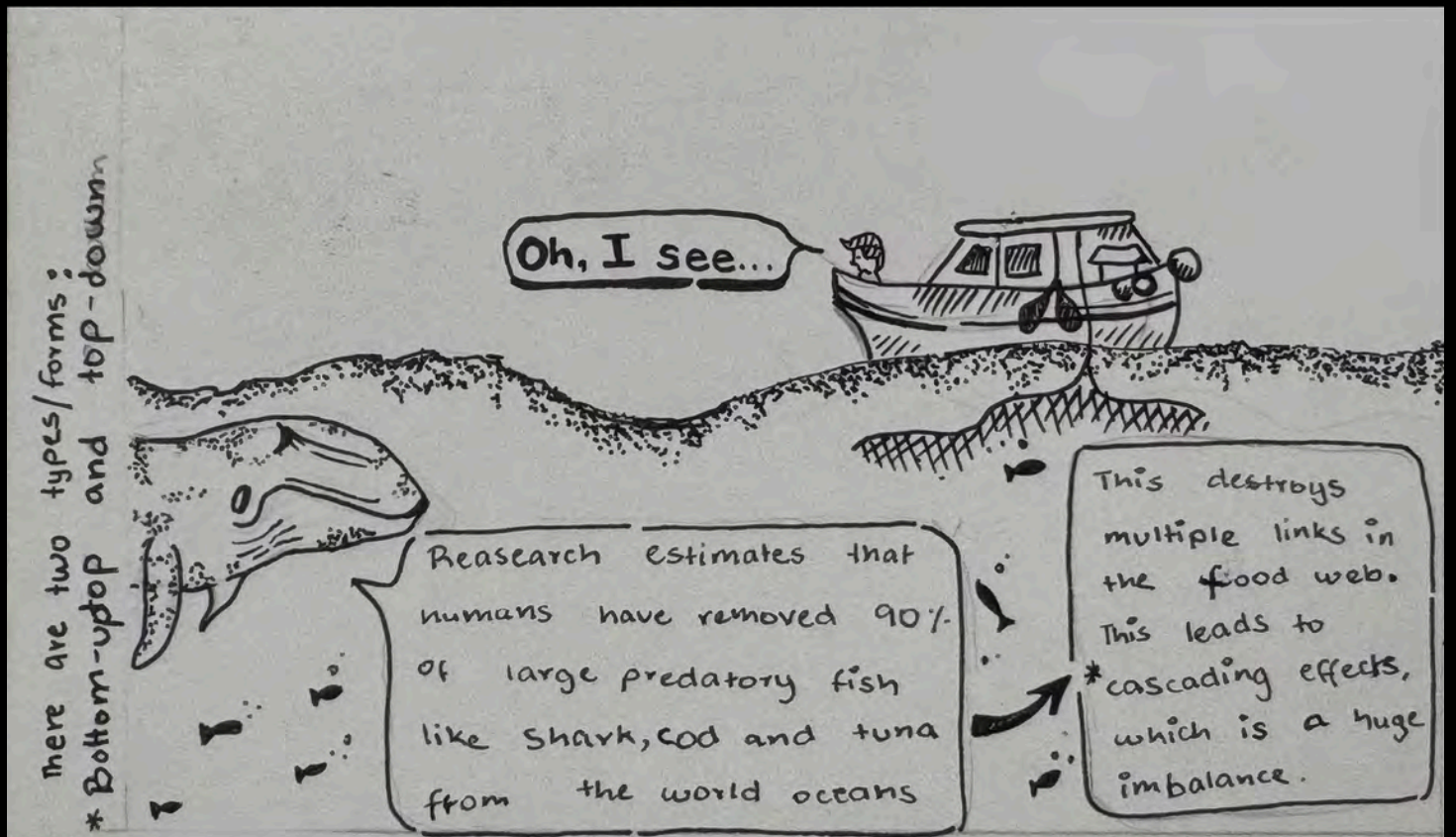
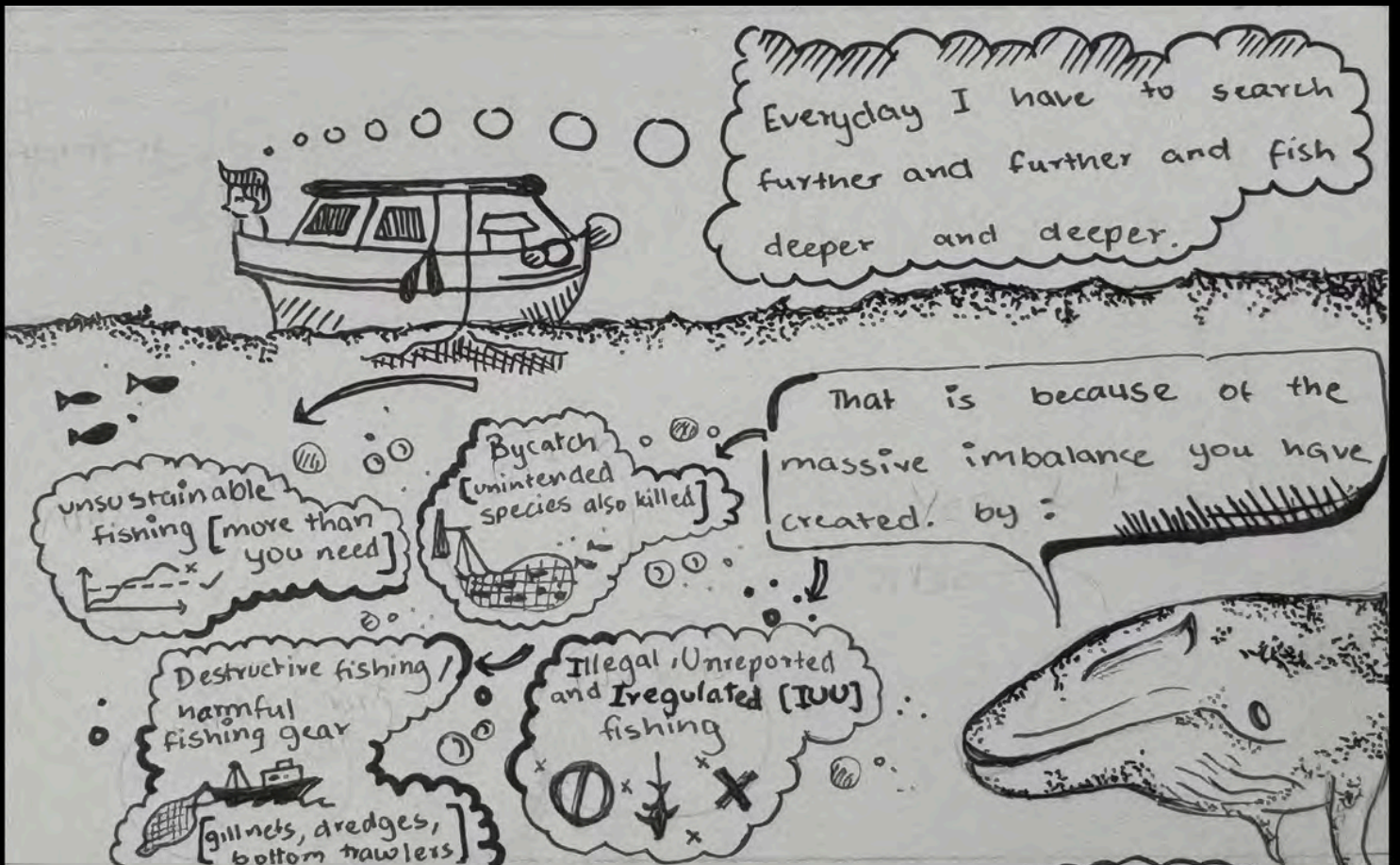
3. Sharks, Whales, Rays, and Turtles - Their goal was to ensure they escape and stay far away from the fishing boat and nets and maintain the balance of the food chain by being the necessary control systems / predators to ensure the prevention of cascading effects.

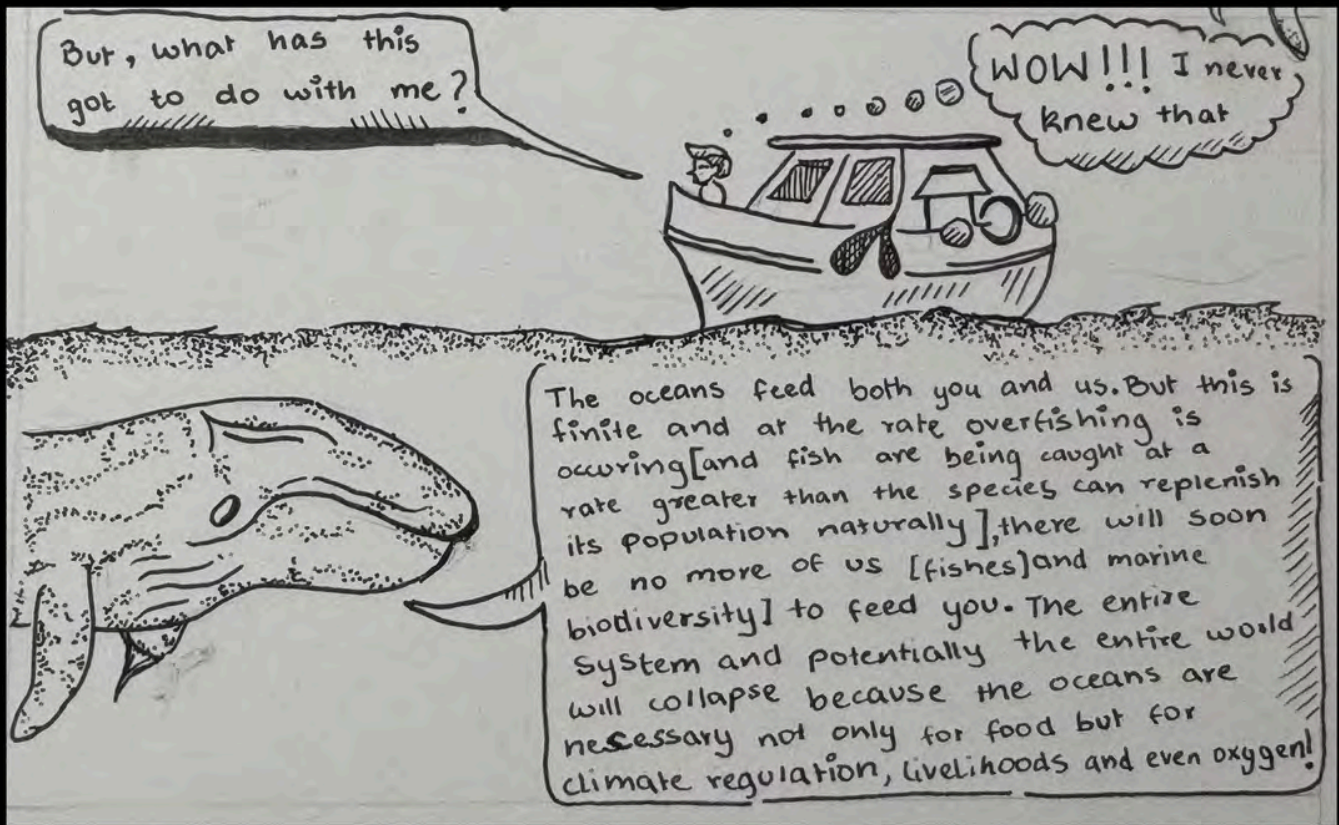




EFFECTS OF MARINE OVERFISHING







4. Jellyfish, Cephalopods, Seahorses, and schools of fish - The members of this team needed to survive without getting trapped in nets and plastic pollution in the ocean.

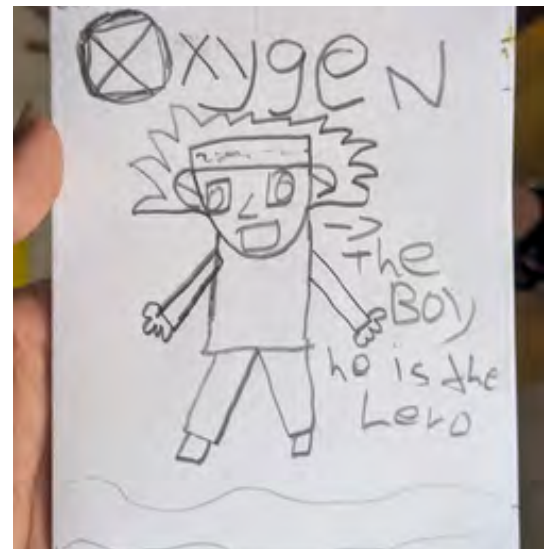
My overall goal was for them to make their own mini illustrations that would eventually be put together like puzzle pieces in order to become a complete marine ecosystem bustling and teeming with life while contrastingly also portraying the harm caused by destructive fishing methods like bottom trawling and dynamite fishing and of course the detrimental impact of overfishing and bycatch.

Much to my pleasure the enthusiastic children all participated, some creating small notes and taking their works home in order to work on them more, a much appreciated act. I was honoured to be a part of the Art for Conservation and I think the workshops I attended were a true testament to what the entire thing is based upon 'The power art' has in effectively communicating and conveying things across all ages, cultures, traditions, and everything bringing people together. It truly knows no limits!

Elakshi Mahika Molur, 9th Grade student, CS Academy, Coimbatore.

LOOK AROUND AND ZINE

“Look Around and Zine!” was a workshop for 12-year-olds that I conducted at my former school, Navadisha Montessori School. In this 2-hour session, we began by exploring what zines are and how they can efficiently tell stories and share ideas with the world, as they are simple 1-page booklets created through specific folding techniques. We then discussed the importance of observing our surroundings, and I encouraged the children to choose





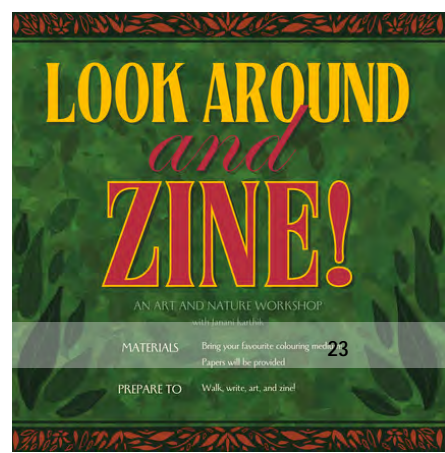
an element or creature in our environment that often goes unnoticed. After a brief warm-up game, we took a short walk outside to observe their chosen subjects. Once we returned, the children spent 15 minutes writing a small story or poem, answering the question: "If your chosen element could speak, what story or poem would it want to share with the world?"

Next, I demonstrated two zine-folding methods and introduced a few composition and illustration techniques, such as the rule of thirds, the golden spiral, collage, line drawings, and using different media. The children then spent the rest of the hour illustrating their stories, resulting in beautiful, thoughtful zines. Some of the topics they chose included leaves, trees, oxygen, flowers, butterflies, and fish. We ended with a discussion on the importance of seeing the

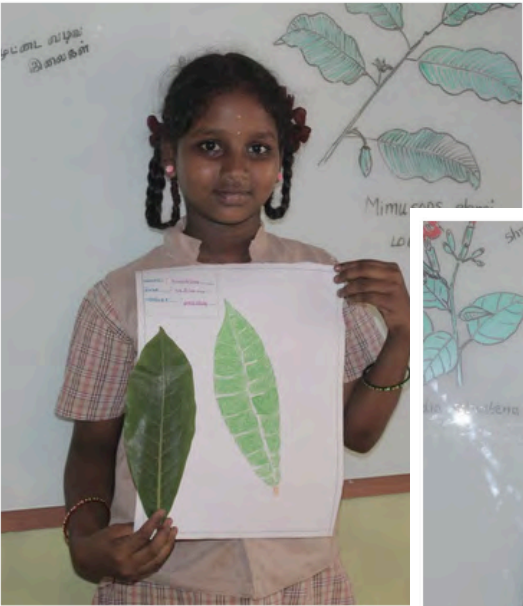
world through the eyes of the elements around us, and during our reflection, the children shared that they felt more compassion for the world we live in. I had a wonderful experience conducting this workshop. Interacting with the children, I could see their innocence and recognized that they were at a formative stage in understanding big concepts like conservation and its significance. Although I've conducted several workshops with children, this was the first one focused on our environment and nature. 'Art for Conservation' (A4C) workshop conducted by Zoo Outreach Organisation was elemental in exploring my artistic skills to communicate nature conservation. This experience has inspired me to explore new and innovative ways to share this perspective through art.



Janani Karthik,
Design Fellow,
Centre for Wildlife
Studies, Bangalore,
Karnataka.

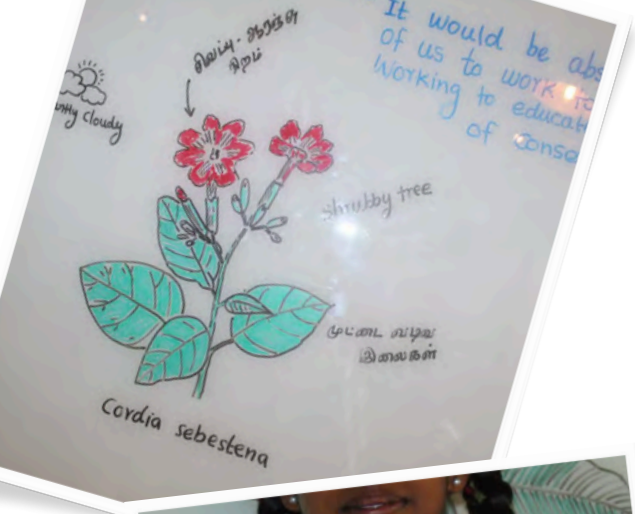


Botanical Illustration Workshop



Overview

The Bengal Fox Interpretation Innovation Incubation Centre conducted a half- day botanical illustration workshop on 29 August 2024. The workshop aimed to introduce young students to the art of botanical illustration, nature journaling, and Plein air painting, fostering creativity while promoting a deeper understanding and connection with the natural world.



Session Details

The workshop began with an introduction to the concept of botanical illustration, a practice that combines science and art to accurately depict plants. The facilitator started by explaining the importance of nature journaling and Plein air painting (outdoor painting) in observing and documenting the natural environment. The session highlighted how these techniques help sharpen observational skills, enhance appreciation for biodiversity, and promote environmental awareness.

To inspire the students, the facilitator showcased their own sketchbook and field notes, providing examples of botanical illustrations created from personal experiences in nature. The students were

excited to see real-life applications of the techniques they would soon be practicing.

Interactive Demonstration

The session continued with a practical demonstration on the whiteboard, where the facilitator guided the students through basic drawing and coloring techniques for botanical illustration. Emphasis was placed on understanding the anatomy of plants, identifying key features, and using colors to accurately represent the plants.

The students were then divided into three groups and encouraged to explore the garden to collect a variety of plants, leaves, and flowers. This hands-on activity helped them experience the first steps of botanical illustration: observing and selecting specimens directly from nature.

Creative Practice

Back in the workshop space, the students began their illustrations. They practiced several techniques, including freehand drawing and tracing, to depict their chosen plants with accuracy and artistic flair. The use of tracing helped them gain confidence in their drawing skills and understand the importance of proportion and detail in botanical art.

Writing and Reflection Activity

To complement their artwork, a short write-up activity was conducted. Each student was asked to add text to their illustrations, describing the plants they had drawn, their observations, and the creative process. This exercise aimed to improve their articulation and understanding of the plants, further connecting them to the natural world.

Conclusion and Feedback

The workshop concluded with an informal sharing session where students presented their illustrations to the group, describing their creative journey and what they learned. The facilitator and participants engaged in a meaningful exchange of ideas, providing constructive feedback and celebrating each other's work.

Individual photographs were taken with their artwork, capturing the joy and pride in their creative achievements. The facilitator expressed their excitement at seeing the students' creativity and eagerness to learn, noting that the session was a two-way learning experience.

Outcomes

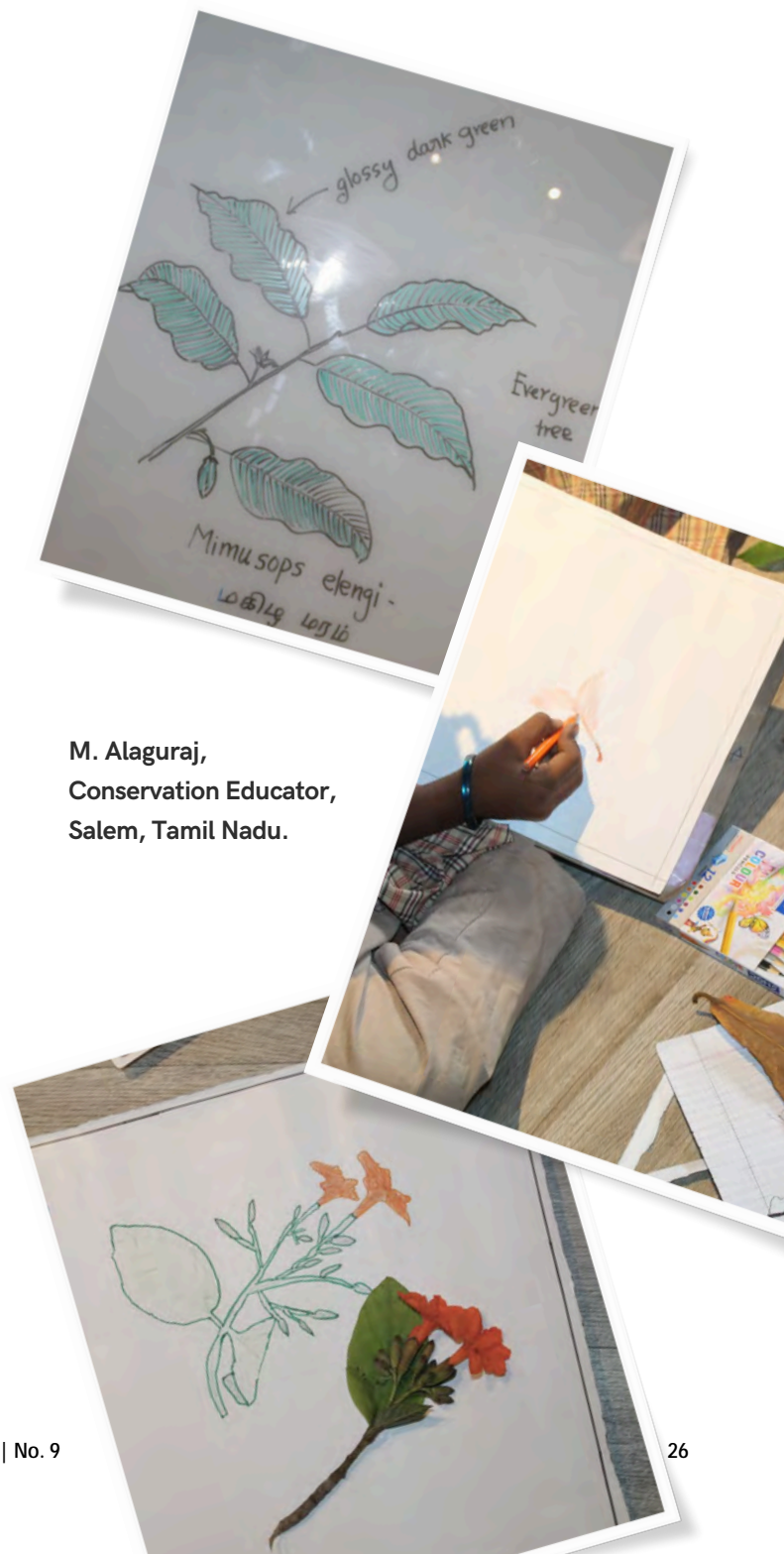
Students gained practical experience in botanical illustration, enhancing their drawing and observation skills.

- The workshop fostered an appreciation for plants and biodiversity among the participants.
- The integration of art with science helped students develop a creative approach to environmental awareness.
- The activity encouraged teamwork, creative expression, and personal reflection.
- Feedback and Recommendations
- The students showed enthusiasm and eagerness to learn, actively participating in all activities.
- Future sessions could include more advanced techniques and digital illustration tools.
- Incorporating more interactive discussions and reflections could deepen their understanding and engagement.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to the teachers of Kamarajar Girls Higher Secondary School, Manakkadu, for their cooperation, and to all the students who participated with such enthusiasm.

Participants: 30 students from 7th B section, Kamarajar Girls Higher Secondary School, Manakkadu, Salem.



M. Alaguraj,
Conservation Educator,
Salem, Tamil Nadu.

CONNECTING *with nature*



In a generation where everyone is so disconnected from nature, it's time to rekindle their love for it. What better way than by taking school-going students into their backyard and encouraging them to observe the fine details we often overlook? Hence, I conducted two 'Nature Journaling Workshops'.

The first program took place at a Montessori school with 10 students, and the second at Uttandi with 20 students. The nature journaling workshop aimed to encourage children to observe their surroundings and depict their observations through drawings.

One doesn't have to be great at drawing for this; those who struggled with drawing were encouraged to write down the shapes, patterns, and colors they observed. Few tried drawing the leaves, flowers, exoskeleton of snail shells, and lifeless butterfly wings. While a few initially complained about mosquitoes, they soon forgot their discomfort as they began to enjoy their time in nature with friends, filled with laughter and learning.

**Indira Naidu, Nature Educator | Artist | Photographer,
Madras Crocodile Bank Trust & Centre for Herpetology,
Chennai, Tamil Nadu.**



BEYOND THE BOX

Children are the most influential and influenceable. As innocent as blank canvases, they are the ones who go on to change the world. As someone who loves teaching, especially younger audiences, this was an incredible opportunity. I had already taken an art class at my martial arts class before, so this was the perfect opportunity to do so again. I, Maya Santhanakrishnan conducted this edition of the 'Beyond the Box' workshop to 18 participants on the 4 May 2024 at MLA Martial Arts Academy, Yelahanka, Bangalore.

I had aimed this workshop at talking about how society views and treats wildlife in India. From the way the Leopards in Bangalore were treated to why, we had discussions on the subject matter while also having fun drawing our favorite wildlife creatures. Most of the kids enjoyed the discussions and were actively participating. They had initially held the idea that leopards were not meant to be on the street because they were "invading" humans, but towards the end, they came to the consensus that it was in fact not in their control as their homes were being taken away by us. From pieces of elephants to fishes to giraffes, the kids created works of art brimming with color and life.

Maya Santhanakrishnan, Animator and Contemporary artist, Srishti Institute of Art and Design, Bangalore, Karnataka

I guided them on how we could interact with an idea as large as wildlife conservation with our own thoughtful contributions, much like 'Art for Conservation' (A4C) workshop had trained me with.

We often forget that pillars are inherently clean until caked with layers of dust by the environment around them. Compassion is our primal nature, why do we fight to deny and pollute it?



REPORT ON OUTREACH

Interactions

8 June 2024, Bhoomi Habba, Visthar, Bangalore

Bringing limelight to invertebrates using an intricate form of art like chalk carving was a bizarre experience, especially in a community Earth festival in Bangalore interacting with approximately 100-150 people with a footfall of over 1,000 in the space. Insects are a highly misunderstood and lesser known group of beings which are threatened due to the climate crisis. Native butterfly species of the Western Ghats in Karnataka were carved as a part of this festival along with an abstract art of Southern Birdwing Butterfly (State Butterfly of Karnataka) with the spirits of Earth.

The idea was to use sculptures and 2 m of cloth mural to interact with lots of school kids, educators and other existing audiences in this festival through a live exhibition. Various intricacies of conservation through art and craft were discussed in this space. Curiosity of kids made the interactions even more insightful and engaging. The chalk carvings of insects were also made using natural paints and eco-friendly materials, which was yet another strong foundation to build more conversations around pigments extracted from insects and their immediate cause of endangerment and extinction. Furthermore, in a remote location of Sharavati during a small summer camp, I collaborated with the local team to do paint works with kids of a nearby village regarding nature centric stories.





The purpose was also to evoke a fascination towards the world of insects using a delicate material like chalk piece, to further ignite the thought of fragility and sensitivity in a fast paced industrial world. In a large gathering of Bhoomi habba - Earth festival at Visthar in Bangalore, I chose to depict insects using animistic beliefs as a way of life.

The project outreach was emphasized on talking about animism as a concept of understanding our nature and surroundings in a much more close knit way, while drawing attention to incorporation of art in the process.

The art works depicted in the exhibition and stall space were made using natural paints such as turmeric, indigo and other berries, signifying the richness of texture and colors. Invertebrates such as butterflies, moths and dragonflies played a major role in the conversation with all the kids and the audience.

The spirits of the forest were woken along with the depicted art works through storytelling.

Being an insect can mean restoring, healing, changing the Earth, the water, and maybe even our "self".

The essence and learnings of the 'Art for Conservation' (A4C) workshop held by Zoo Outreach Organisation for artists was communicated with the local public in small gatherings through discussions and safe circle spaces during the exhibition. The whole exhibition including my outreach activity was covered by The Hindu newspaper on 8 June 2024.

16th edition of Bhoomi Habba, a celebration of eco consciousness

The festival drew a vibrant crowd who came together to participate in a variety of engaging activities, creative workshops, and exhibits

The Hindu Bureau, BENGALURU

The 16th edition of Bhoomi Habba was held on June 8, at the Visthar campus. The festival drew a vibrant crowd who came together to celebrate eco-consciousness through a variety of engaging activities, creative workshops, panel discussions, interactive exhibits and performances, all centered around this year's theme: "Save Water, Save Lives!"

Exhibitions
The event featured different types of workshops and exhibitions, some of which were Noor Fatima's session on mechanical plants and Anzara Mukherjee's innovative "Trash to Toy" upcycling workshop. The event also featured a poetry session with Neha Am, and exhibitions on environmental themes including Akhil Jacob's "Time Triangle Tales" and Fabad's "Water Journeys" photo story. Argaly's "Unraveling Animism" showcased the interplay of natural elements through art.

Live paintings
Visitors enjoyed live painting by artists from Art Mantram and participated in community painting workshops led by Priscilla, where they created beautiful folk

flowers and fish illustrations on wooden coasters. Traditional games, Warli painting with Akshaya, and recycled papermaking with Begana Recycling Unit were also big hits.

Film screenings
The event also witnessed captivating indigenous instrument music, a powerful theatre piece by Visthar Sanga Shale, folk dance, panel discussions and film screenings that facilitated crucial

conversations on climate change and water conservation. David Solovaya's "Spacewalk" provided attendees with a unique view of Visthar's sustainable architecture and artistic spaces. The

"Treesellers Katti" session by Charumathi Supraja offered a space for tree stories and multi-art activities, fostering a deeper connection with nature.

The festival was inaugurated by Dr. Jia Harsingh, Managing Trustee of An Mantram and former Director General of Police, Government of Karnataka, who emphasized the importance of community-driven sustainability efforts.

Skills from the event: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

HAND CARVED CHALKS

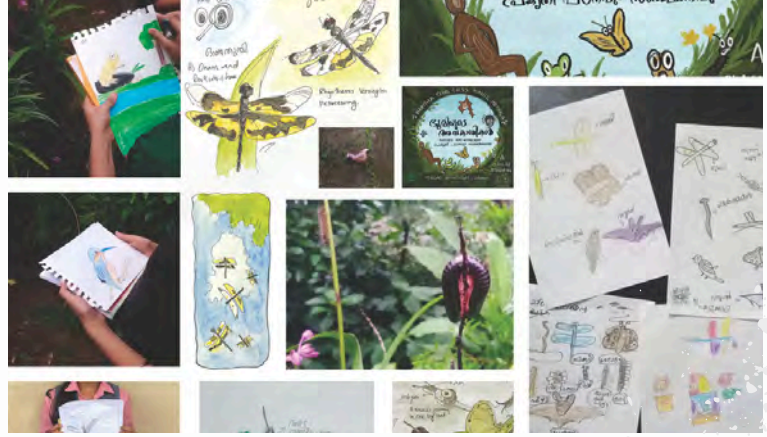
FESTIVAL RESIDUE CENTRE

Anjali Pujari, Interdisciplinary artist, Sharavathi, Karnataka.

Nature Art

CONVERSATIONS

The 'Nature Art Conversations' activity conducted by me at Government Higher Secondary School (GHSS), Kallil, Ernakulam on 19 August 2024 for 35 6th standard students, was a truly enriching, fun, and valuable learning experience for both the students and myself. Our session kicked off with a fun warm-up activity, where we created Nature ID cards inspired by the portrait



sketching exercise from 'Art for Conservation' workshop (A4C), conducted by Zoo Outreach Organisation. I shared and showed them some interesting stories about species they can spot in their own backyard, aiming to spark their curiosity and excitement about exploring their surroundings.



I created cute, cartoonist illustrations inspired by the storyboard and cartoonist style of examples shown by Stephen Nash and Luci Nash, expert artists at the Art4C workshop. Art greatly helped in explaining the stories and kept the kids engaged.



Finally, we took a walk around the school compound, observing the surroundings within the limited area.

The children then sketched their favourite stories from the session, and although their creations were simple line sketches, their imagination was truly amazing. The session was an incredible experience for me. Hearing the children enthusiastically share the stories I told them about various species with their friends and parents was truly heartwarming, and I believe that's the most rewarding outcome I could have hoped for from this session.

Deeply grateful to the Zoo Outreach Organisation for introducing this activity.

Thankful to Stephan and Luci for sharing their artistic wisdom and inspiring me to use it in this meaningful way.

Athulya N.K., Freelance Wildlife Illustrator and Architect, Ernakulam, Kerala.

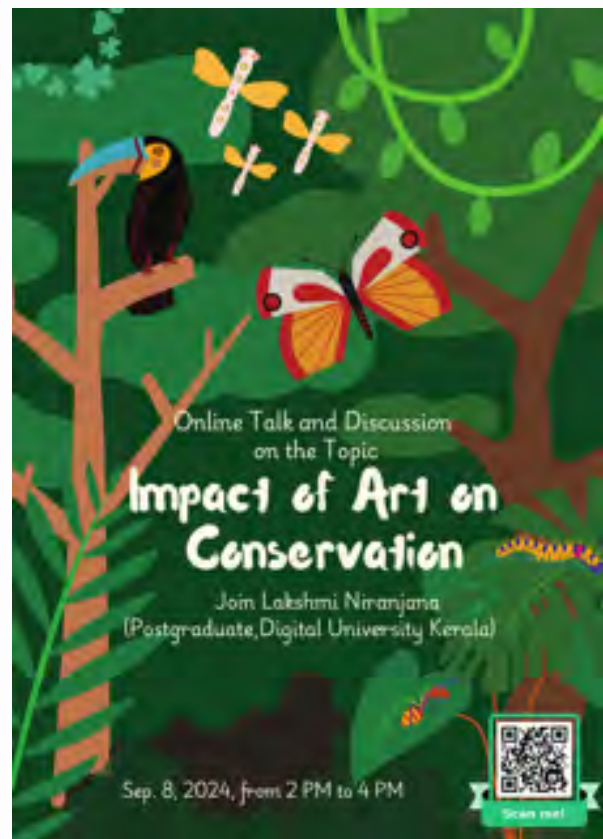
Impact of art on conservation

On 8 September 2024, I hosted an online talk and discussion titled "Impact of Art on Conservation," which was attended by 26 participants from my university and peer group. The session focused on the transformative role art can play in driving conservation efforts. We explored how art can reshape perceptions and enhance awareness of biodiversity and ecosystems.

The talk covered various ways in which art can mitigate undesired fear towards certain species, emphasizing how positive portrayals can alter misconceptions. Additionally, we discussed the use of animated videos as an effective medium to engage audiences and communicate the relevance of biodiversity conservation.

Through my artworks and other illustrative examples, we examined how art can challenge traditional notions of beauty in nature, leading to a more profound appreciation of its diversity. The session demonstrated the significant potential of art to inspire and influence effective conservation practices, highlighting its role in fostering a deeper connection between people and the natural world.

One participant said, "I have never considered art as a way of rethinking beauty in nature – how can we make more people like us, with no art background, to encourage artists to work in this manner?". This comment ended the discussion on a hopeful note, opening up the support for upcoming artists to pay more attention to the use of their talents for conservation.



Lakshmi Niranjana, Kerala University of Digital Sciences, Innovation and Technology , Thonnakkal P.O, Kerala

Unlocking Art

A Glimpse into Performing Arts (Theatre) Workshop to Save Wildlife

Introduction

The performing arts (theatre) workshop under 'Art for Conservation' (A4C), organized by the Zoo Outreach Organisation, took place in Coimbatore from 29 April to 1 May 2024. The workshop was designed by Mrs. Priyanka Iyer, a wildlife researcher and conservationist.

Mr. Dharanidharan, an actor and founder of Uruveli, a theatre company in Coimbatore, guided the participants in unleashing the creative potential of aspiring actors, nature enthusiasts, and conservationists. This event attracted a diverse group of participants eager to explore new dimensions of performance art with the common goal of protecting nature.

Objectives

The workshop aimed to refine participants' acting techniques through a series of innovative exercises and group activities. By focusing on improvisation and character development, the session sought to enhance each actor's versatility and confidence on stage.

1. Workshop Activities

Participants engaged in a variety of activities, including spontaneous improvisation exercises, character-building workshops, and scene study sessions. Each activity was designed to push boundaries and encourage participants to think outside the box.



Skit rehearsal related to human-leopard interaction with students from Kannuru-Government Higher Primary School



Discussion with students from Kannuru-Government Higher Primary School after the rehearsal.

2. Guide

Dharanidharan's expertise in theatre provided invaluable insights and inspiration to the attendees. His energy is unmatched and magnetic, drawing even introverted individuals to perform their best. I recall him emphasizing, "There are no boundaries in theatre".

3. My Experience

I left the workshop with a renewed sense of enthusiasm and a toolkit of new techniques. The improvisation exercises were particularly eye-opening, helping me further step out of my comfort zone and approach acting with a fresh perspective.

4. Activities Conducted at Government Schools of Hanur Taluk, Chamarajanagar District, Karnataka

A total of 73 students participated in the training program from three Government Higher Primary Schools (Kempaihanahatti, Ramapura, and Kannuru). We selected 47 students to train further and upgrade their basic skills to the next level. We made 30 visits to these schools and chose 12 students from Government Higher Primary School, Kannuru, to participate in the final event in Coimbatore.

These training programs have proven to be an excellent platform for wildlife education through skit performances.

Summary

Overall, the performing arts (theatre) workshop proved to be a dynamic and enriching experience for all involved. The creative energy and growth witnessed during this workshop will undoubtedly leave a lasting impression on the participants.



Discussions with school teachers and principal of Ramapura-Government Higher Primary School.



Skit performance related to human-leopard interaction from students of Ramapura-Government Higher Primary School.

The teachers and students were delighted to learn, understand, and appreciate a new concept of performance art aimed at protecting wildlife. We are awestruck by the impact this training program had on young minds and teachers. We are optimistic that this training can influence people's attitudes, and we plan to extend it further by conducting street plays in nearby villages of Kannuru, which are close to forest fringes.

Thank You Note

I would like to thank Dr. Sanjay Gubbi, programme head, Holématti Nature Foundation (HNF), Dr. Sanjay Molur, executive director, Zoo Outreach Organisation, and Mrs Priyanka Iyer for giving us this wonderful opportunity to be a part of the theatre workshop and to advance it. I also thank my colleague Mr. Abhishek, nature educator, for collating the school data and pictures for the article.

Ashritha Anoop, Project Coordinator for Community and Outreach Programmes at Holématti Nature Foundation (HNF) & Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF). Hanur, Karnataka.



Participants explaining their wildlife journey.



Participants rehearsing a scene study during the workshop.

Theatrics of Climate Change:

A Youth Workshop

I have always been interested in theatre and arts, so when Dharanidharan shared the theatre workshop details conducted by Zoo Outreach Organisation as part of 'Art for Conservation' (A4C) workshop with me, I was keen to attend especially since I had seen him perform and create magic on stage. When I came to A4C I realised, this is the meeting point for art and nature. Both of these can give immense peace and joy to anyone who is willing to fully immerse themselves into it.

After the three-day workshop, I conducted an outreach program on 10 June 2024 for 10 kids passionate about performing arts.

We started our sessions with warmups and did specific experiential learning session on understanding our body, the space it uses and how we can use our body to communicate the story/subject.

This was followed by using the next tool in the arsenal of a theatre artists which is their voice; we did exercises on resonance (vibration of vocal cords), projection (throwing our voice), and articulation (pronunciation). All of these have the ability to make or break a play, be it an open air street play with audience all around or a perfectly choreographed play for an air-conditioned auditorium.

This discussion led me to teach about use of a given space for a performance to maximise impact and reach. We discussed how to support a co-artist and give appropriate reactions to make sure the story comes to life and is relatable. All of these exercises were done using the examples of climate change, carbon emissions, unpredicted ecological events, vehicular pollution among other things. The program ended with an animated discussion on how it is crucial to keep in touch with our planet Earth and how crucial it is to reconnect with nature. An unforgettable moment is when one little girl said, "We have to heal the world and create a wonderful place to live in".



Santhosh Kumar, Freelance artist (naam_for.art) and photo editor, Urban Art Photography, Ganapathy, Coimbatore.

BRINGING CONSERVATION TO LIFE

Insights from a Workshop on
Performing Arts for Conservation

In an era where many people struggle to grasp the significance of climate change amid complex scientific jargon, it has become increasingly crucial to simplify and communicate the message of environmental conservation and climate change in a way that resonates with the general public. As someone deeply involved in wildlife education, who better than me to understand the challenges of effectively communicating these critical issues and making them accessible to a broader audience?



So, I was very excited when I received the opportunity to participate in the theatre workshop organized by the Zoo Outreach Organisation on 29–30 April and 1 May, 2024. The chance to explore performing arts and to see how theatre, a medium I appreciate and which has so much power to engage and inspire, could be harnessed to make complex issues like climate change more relatable and impactful for the general public really caught my attention.

Dharanidaran, a talented theatre artist and founder of Udalveli Arts Foundation, led the workshop. One moment that stands out vividly in my memory is our first task, which was to introduce ourselves uniquely. We had to enter from a designated starting point, walk to a stopping point, and simply state our name, where we were from, and what we liked— without showing any emotion or movement.

This simple exercise helped break the ice and allowed us to learn more about each other. Yet, what struck me most was how challenging it was to withhold emotion. It made me reflect on how naturally we express ourselves through gestures and facial expressions that are part of non-verbal communication which form 70% of all our communication—something that, in theatre, requires practice to control.



Learning about various theatre techniques—such as picture frame dramatization, entry songs, and breaking scenes into distinct frames—was truly eye-opening as the workshop progressed. Dharanidaran also made sure that participants from different states showcased songs in their native languages, allowing us to learn new songs and understand their meanings, which enriched the experience even further. One particular entry song we learned and practiced as a group in the workshop that is a part of most therukoothu performances in Tamil Nadu, "Vandhane denapaarange," felt refreshing and vibrant, adding an energizing element to the workshop.

A notable highlight during the workshop for me was when the Zooreach team and Dharanidaran gave the participants the task of breaking down scenes into different frames with the topic of human-elephant coexistence. Interestingly, in almost every group's performance, the performance somehow subtly blamed the elephant rather than the humans for the conflict.

This pattern highlighted something meaningful—how essential it is to be conscious of the messaging in the stories we portray, especially regarding conservation. It reminded me how easily we might shift narratives and place blame where it doesn't belong. This realization made me even more aware of our responsibility as storytellers, educators, and performers in conservation.

To conclude, the workshop has strengthened my belief that theatre is a powerful medium to bridge the gap between art and conservation, and has given me new perspectives and skills. This has renewed my confidence and I am excited to explore how these ideas can be applied to future conservation initiatives and build new narratives in my work.

**Tandrali Baruah, IOCEAN Educator
Zoo Outreach Organisation, Coimbatore.**



Staging Nature: Manipal's Theatrical Approach to Birding



I, Arjun, a member of Manipal Birding and Conservation (MBAC), Manipal, Karnataka, had the privilege of attending the "Art for Conservation - Theatre" workshop organized by Zooreach in Coimbatore from 29 April to 01 May 2024. As part of the outreach criteria for this workshop, my co-members Dr. Vrinda & Dr Ketaki and I conducted our session on 17 August 2024 in Little Rock Indian School at Brahmavara, Karnataka, involving school children. Students from grades 5 to 10 participated enthusiastically in the session, which aimed to raise awareness about birding and conservation.

We discussed the importance of the natural environment around us and the significance of preserving it for future generations. To make the session more interactive and engaging, we incorporated elements of theatre, which helped in fostering a deeper connection with the students. A little more interactive, incorporating theatre elements and mimicry making the students to replicate bird calls or animal sounds. The kids enjoyed creating art with nature that helped them feel closer to the earth in a beautiful, whimsical, and educational setting.

We would ask them to embody various birds and animals, moving as if they had become that creature – making noises even. This being interactive made the session interesting and fun also at the same time children were able to observe different characteristics of a species. I loved watching students get excited about the wildlife that is hiding in plain sight around them. Following the discussion, we conducted quizzes and activities where students identified bird species through their calls and shared their personal experiences of witnessing wildlife in their local surroundings. The interactive approach, combined with theatre techniques, made the learning experience enjoyable and effective.

The session provided a platform for the students to not only learn about conservation but also actively participate and express their thoughts, creating an impactful learning experience. This engagement reaffirmed the importance of environmental education at a young age and the role it plays in nurturing future stewards of nature.

M.S. Arjun, Member of Manipal Birding and Conservation (MBAC), Manipal, Karnataka.

BRIDGING ECOLOGY AND DRAMA

As an ecologist, I am deeply connected to my surroundings and nature. My concern extends beyond just scientific research; it's about the impact human actions have on the environment, often without realizing it. My belief in the importance of effective science communication, especially to the public is really important.

While we focus on research, it's vital that this knowledge reaches everyone. I believe theatre is an excellent tool for bridging this gap. After attending the Zooreach Art for Conservation program, I gained valuable insight into expressing my concerns about conservation and climate change through drama. Inspired by this, I conducted two camps and workshops at schools under the Compassion Foundation, training over 100 students in conservation ideas through drama on 14 & 25 July 2024.

These workshops culminated in short skits that celebrated the harmony of forests and life. I feel fortunate to have participated in the Art for Conservation workshop, as it has allowed me to share my passion for the environment with the next generation, fostering both awareness and creativity.

Meenakshi A.K., M.Sc. Student, Malappuram, Kerala



Theatre Outreach Workshop

I had an opportunity to attend a workshop on theatre skills conducted by Dharanidharan organised Zoo Outreach Organisation supported by US Consulate General, Chennai. Post the workshop, I led a theatre outreach workshop for a group of children from Government Primary School, Ramaswamy Nagar, Koundampalayam.

The workshop was conducted for a duration of one week with eight children from fourth standard and one child from fifth standard participated. The main objective was to raise awareness about wildlife-human interactions, wildlife conservation, importance of preserving forests, and dispel myths about snakes. After days of practice and lot of efforts from the students, teachers, and your truly, we have the final Rehearsal on 3 September 2024 and a performance for the school assembly on 4 September 2024.

My role in this outreach workshop was that of a trainer and facilitator of the theatre workshop, preparation of props from scratch, and helping children overcome stage fear, develop voice modulation, and presentation skills.

And during the one week I realised that the children gained confidence and stage presence, developed an understanding of important environmental and conservation issues, and learned to express themselves creatively through theatre. On the whole, it was an extremely rewarding experience!



R. Padma, Lakshya Apts, Ramaswamy Nagar Extn. 2, Nallampalayam, Near Amritha School, Coimbatore.



CONSERVATION THROUGH STORIES

I got an opportunity to conduct a story telling session at Kids Business Expo event in Tirupur on 28 April 2024. It had a mixed crowd of a lot of young children, their parents, local people, nature club members, wildlife photographers and so on. Trained by 'Art for Conservation' (A4C) workshop on storytelling, I chose to narrate the story of 'Saathi - The Street Dog from Dharamsala India' (by Julie Palais).

It was a real-life story of how a stray Indie Dog in Dharamasala suffered cruelty for no fault of her own. However, due to kind hearted souls, Saathi gets adopted (by the author herself, in real life) and gets to live a happy life. It showed the pitiful life of the strays and their longing to have a home and loving family to call their own. I also explained about how each of us (children especially) can do their bit to stand up and care for the voiceless and also the organizations that help them.

Following the story, I conducted a fun game and the first five winners received a copy of the book 'Saathi'.

It is not easy to make children and the common man understand the burning issues of conservation.



Statistics and scientific terminologies will not help. But when told through interesting stories in the mother tongue/native language, they are able to relate and react to it.

I usually combine my sessions with a fun activity related to the conservation issue. This makes it more fun for them. My audience have always been very enthusiastic whenever I narrate stories about conservation. Children specifically felt deeply about the issues and came up with a lot of questions for me. This constantly motivates me to reach out to more children and other audiences whenever I get the chance.

Senbaga Poonguzhali, Storyteller, Thamizh Tutor, Blogger, Bharatanatyam Dancer, Coimbatore.

Empowering Educators through Storytelling



I recently trained 24 teachers in a one-day workshop on 30 May 2024, Vishwankar Public School, Coimbatore exploring the art of storytelling as a tool for conservation education. The day culminated in a group storytelling session, where teachers showcased



their newfound skills, impressing me with their engaging voice modulation, confident eye contact, creative incorporation of wildlife concepts, and thought-provoking ethical takeaways.

I thank Zoo Outreach Organisation, for inspiring and equipping me to conduct this workshop. I'm eager to continue empowering teachers and touching lives through storytelling, seeding conservation values in young minds. By sharing the power of storytelling, I aim to inspire a love for conservation and learning. I look forward to conducting more workshops, helping educators ignite imagination and curiosity in their students, and fostering a new generation of conservation leaders. Together, I believe, we can make a difference!

Since my workshop, teachers have continued to reach out for support and share their achievements. I've been delighted to help, such as providing a teacher with techniques to create a convincing crocodile sound effect, which led to a successful and engaging session with her students. Another teacher sought my guidance on crafting a story about Ganesh Chaturthi, and I offered a plan that incorporated fascinating elephant facts and highlighted the importance of conservation. I'm passionate about empowering educators to share stories that inspire a love of nature and learning in young minds. The skills I gained from the Zooreach's 'Art for Conservation' (A4C) workshop have been invaluable in shaping my approach.

**Lalitha Shankar, Professional Storyteller,
Founder-Karu, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.**



From Learning to Sharing



Story is a narrative, which is either true or fiction, in prose or verse, it is designed to reach the audience with their interest, amusing to the hearer or reader. Story telling is an art which involves primarily using words and actions (secondarily properties and other required things) connecting with the listeners and taking them on a virtual journey and sharing the information. It can be the strongest tool as it spreads awareness and touches the critically important issues/aspects. Over the years stories have been passed from generations to generations as knowledge. Without living in that moment, we know about the history such as Ramayana and Mahabharata. Through these stories cultural heritage has been preserved for future generations. Giving a strong message, understanding or learning/ lessons.

I attended the 'Art for conservation' (A4C) workshop conducted by the team at Zoo Outreach Organisation, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. Peter Viegas, Chetan Shetty, Sunita Shetty, and Audry Viegas made best use of three days teaching us the story telling and its background which all the participants thoroughly enjoyed and were grateful. After coming home, I started working on it, reaching not only 25 people but as many as I could, conducting small sessions of storytelling. Representing stories and what I learned from the workshop, in my vicinity of friends, family, neighbors and their known people. I told them a story which Peter told us in the workshop, "The Mountain That Loved a Bird", by Alice McLerran. Initially I fumbled, even broke the original story and made a few minor changes which I learned from the workshop.

Also, I shared my own story of "The Ocean Ecosystems" by putting all the scientific information about marine biology that I know, taking them on an underwater journey from coastal area of shores to deep sea. And telling them about various marine species and their survival strategies adaptations such as bioluminescence used in hunting by angler fishes, from giant whales to tiniest planktons etc. As we connected through the medium of art, my participants understood the following things from "The Mountain That Loved a Bird" – the network of nature and how presence of one organism affects another. From "The Ocean Ecosystems" they understood the dynamic of the ocean and different layers with respect to the depth, in simple words, the environment beneath the waves.

We discussed more about life forms and their survival and how we humans affect it. And why they need conservation. And how we can contribute to it, such as avoiding single use plastics and minimizing its usage as plastic is a major problem in the food chain. By sharing this information and talking to them, I felt this awareness is needed as there are people who care about nature and conservation but either they don't have the knowledge or don't know what to do, hence reaching out to people and making a small impact and telling them to spread the awareness can actually bring a wave from small ripples. Hence, I believe these kinds of workshops are essential.

Aditya Salvi, Marine Biology Outreach Officer, Andaman Island.

How to engage in conversations on climate crisis?

Have you ever tried initiating a conversation about environmental issues with your friends, relatives, or colleagues, only to be downplayed? Perhaps they weren't interested, or they seemed unconcerned about such matters. But is there a way to truly get them to listen? The answer may lie in an ancient tradition that has captivated audiences for generations. For centuries, particularly within tribal communities, storytelling has been a powerful way to communicate. More than just entertainment, it conveys morals, sparks conversations about critical issues, and bridges the gap between different perspectives. When discussing urgent topics like environmental issues and climate crisis, storytelling offers a way to engage people who might otherwise be indifferent.

The Storytellers based in Pune – Chetan Shetty, Sunita Shetty, Peter Viegas, and Audre – shared this timeless art with us at a workshop. They led us through three days of immersive activities designed to sharpen our storytelling skills and show how stories can captivate audiences. Through exercises such as staring into a neighbor's eyes, playing mirroring games, forming stories from random words and sentences, and finding six commonalities with another participant, we honed our storytelling skills.

One of the most engaging activities was the Problem X game. In this exercise, five of us took turns: one person presented a scenario, the next defined a problem, the third amplified the problem tenfold, the fourth proposed a solution, and the final person provided a takeaway.

The exercise was both entertaining and enlightening, demonstrating how a story unfolds: introduction, problem, amplification, solution, and moral.

This approach illustrates how storytelling can be used to frame even complex issues like the climate crisis in a way that captures attention and fosters understanding. So, the next time you try to engage your friends or colleagues on environmental matters, consider structuring your discussion like a story—start with a relatable scenario, build up the stakes, offer solutions, and convey the importance of the issue.

Another effective way to communicate a message is through narrating published stories. This approach allows for creative engagement with the plot and characters, delivering a tale effectively within a set timeframe. During the workshop, Peter, Chetan, and Sunita shared some captivating stories with us before dinner. One memorable tale was “The Mountain That Loved the Bird”, a touching story about a bird named Joy and the next 100 generations of Joy that brought life to a barren mountain.

Peter's vivid descriptions and attention to detail deeply captivated us and stirred our emotions. After the story concluded, we spent half an hour discussing our reactions and interpretations. Some of us reflected on how seemingly small, invisible changes can lead to significant transformations.





Others noted that such selfless acts could profoundly impact others' lives. Remarkably, this story also touched on the theory of evolution, illustrating how the Earth's journey mirrors the slow, gradual process of natural development over millions and billions of years. This discussion highlighted the power of storytelling to not only convey complex ideas but also to foster deep, meaningful connections and insights among listeners. The ORID framework is an effective tool to recollect and help interpret the story with the audience.

O stands for Objective - characters and places, data mentioned in the story; R stands for reflective - what does the story remind an individual; I stands for Interpretive - key takeaways; D stands for Decisive - action points one would like to implement (Use this to start discussions after narrating the story) However, narrating a written story can be challenging, especially when deciding which details to omit. The process is more manageable when broken down into steps. Start by reading the entire story to understand its essence. Then, divide the narrative into three main plots and break each plot down into three key points.

List the characters, describe them, and identify which ones play major roles. This creates a structural skeleton for your narration, allowing you to focus on the most impactful elements.

In the workshop, we applied this technique to the story "Saving the Dalai Lama's Cranes". We were divided into groups and tasked with creating our versions of the story using the skeleton approach. It was fascinating to see how each of the groups presented the same story in unique ways. One group omitted a character, another combined two characters, played with the plot, and emphasized different aspects of the message. Notably, one team used three characters to narrate the story directly, which proved to be an effective and engaging method. This exercise demonstrated how flexible storytelling can be, even when working with published material.

By focusing on the core elements and practicing, one can effectively convey a story while adapting it to suit different audiences and contexts.

In the end, the workshop provided more than just a platform for practice; it underscored that storytelling is a skill that can be learned and continually refined. Whether applied to science, art, or everyday conversations, storytelling remains a timeless and powerful means of connection. So, have you discovered a method to engage and initiate conversations on conservation and climate crisis? Have you found ways to simplify complex facts into well-crafted stories? Happy storytelling!

Paridhi Modi, Zoo Outreach Organisation, Coimbatore



ZOO'S PRINT

Communicating science for conservation

ZOO'S PRINT Publication Guidelines

We welcome articles from the conservation community of all SAARC countries, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and other tropical countries if relevant to SAARC countries' problems and potential.

Type — Articles of semi-scientific or technical nature. News, notes, announcements of interest to conservation community and personal opinion pieces.

Feature articles — articles of a conjectural nature — opinions, theoretical, subjective.

Case reports: case studies or notes, short factual reports and descriptions.

News and announcements — short items of news or announcements of interest to zoo and wildlife community

Cartoons, puzzles, crossword and stories

Subject matter: Captive breeding, (wild) animal husbandry and management, wildlife management, field notes, conservation biology, population dynamics, population genetics, conservation education and interpretation, wild animal welfare, conservation of flora, natural history and history of zoos. Articles on rare breeds of domestic animals are also considered.

Source: Zoos, breeding facilities, holding facilities, rescue centres, research institutes, wildlife departments, wildlife protected areas, bioparks, conservation centres, botanic gardens, museums, universities, etc. Individuals interested in conservation with information and opinions to share can submit articles ZOOS' PRINT magazine.

Manuscript requirements

Articles should be typed into a Word document with no more than 800 words of text and 10 key References (Tables, Images with copyright information, and Videos are encouraged) and emailed to zp@zooreach.org. Include the names of one or two potential reviewers when submitting a publication.

Articles which should contain citations should follow this guideline: a bibliography organized alphabetically and containing all details referred in the following style: surname, initial(s), year, title of the article, name of journal, volume, number, pages.

Editorial details

Articles will be edited without consultation unless previously requested by the authors in writing. Authors should inform editors if the article has been published or submitted elsewhere for publication.

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