MESSAGES FROM COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE

Dear Readers,

During COVID crisis, the entire world is at crossroads. The unprecedented and unparalleled Global crisis due to COVID-19, a zoonotic pandemic outbreak, has brought at a standstill, the entire global mobility, supply-chain systems, economic activities, thus threatening the very existence of human beings and their livelihoods. What seeds to be sown now for sustainable future! Certainly, we want a future with cleaner, greener and more equitable world for everyone. We need to halt further destruction of nature. Future financial and economic systems should value fixing of broken relationships with nature to minimise potential risks of such future endemics. COVID-19 also alarms us to look into; the way we develop our cities, the way we grow our food, the way we develop businesses, the way we respect and value nature, the way we conserve species, the way we degrade natural resources, the way we consume, the way we recycle waste and over all the way we inhabit and care for Planet Earth. We need to fix our broken relationships with nature.

I encourage you to send your thoughts and innovative practices in the process of commitments towards nature care, sustainability and biodiversity conservation, that we can share with our readers.

Best wishes,

DR. VIVEK SAXENA

IUCN India Leaders for Nature Membership Highlights

Leaders for Nature (LfN) organized an online forum on “Business Sector Responsibilities, Challenges and Opportunities for Nature Conservation Post COVID-19” on Earth Day- 22nd April, 2020. The event saw participation of over 17 corporates including LfN India members. The forum facilitated discussions on the means industries are working towards biodiversity conservation and opportunities to sustain their businesses. The forum was successful in bringing together corporates and to discuss the uncertainties in the upcoming times and the importance of natural capital to be maintained in the post COVID-19 world.

You can access the story here.
IUCN India under its LfN India has partnered with India Climate Collaborative for a 3-part digital series on New Worlds: India in a Rapidly Changing Climate. The first of this webinar series took place on 9th May 2020 with eminent panel of speakers like Ms. Barkha Dutt (Emmy-nominated reporter, Author, Columnist, Editor - YouTube news channel MoJo), Shri Jairam Ramesh (Former Minister of Environment and Forests, Government of India), Ms. Rohini Nilekani (Philanthropist and Founder Chairperson of Arghyam), and Shri Navroz Dubash (Professor, Centre for Policy Research). You can access the recording here.

UPCOMING WEBINARS

The next webinar in this series is on Re-emerging Green into a Post-COVID India on 16th May 2020, with Shri Nadir Godrej (Managing Director, Godrej Industries and Chairman, Godrej Agrovet), Shri Janmejaya Sinha (Chairman Boston Consulting Group India), and Shri Vikram Singh Mehta (Chairman and Senior Fellow, Brookings India). This would be moderated by Ms. Sunita Narain (Director General, Centre for Science & Environment and Editor, Down to Earth).

IUCN India under its Leaders for Nature India program is designing a 6-part webinar series on “Why Conservation is Essential for Tourism Based Livelihoods Post COVID-19?” starting from 25th May 2020. To partner with us, write to aanchal.saxena@iucn.org!

IUCN GLOBAL BUSINESS AND BIODIVERSITY PROGRAM

The IUCN Business and Biodiversity Programme was established in 2003 to influence and support private partners in addressing environmental and social issues. The Programme's work is led by a Business Engagement Strategy, approved by the IUCN Council, to engage the business sectors that have a significant impact on natural resources and livelihoods. These include: large ‘footprint’ industries such as mining and oil and gas; biodiversity-dependent industries including fishing, agriculture and forestry; and, financial services and “green” enterprises such as organic farming, renewable energy and nature-based tourism. Learn more here.

INTERESTING READS

The 2020 Edelman Trust Barometers’ “Special Report: Brand Trust and the Coronavirus Pandemic” You can access the report here. According to the report, the trust between government, business, NGOs and media can be maintained by balancing competence with ethical behaviour.

World Business Council for Sustainable Development has released a report on “The consequences of COVID-19 for the decade ahead: Vision 2050 issue brief” for the world to be able to live within Planetary boundaries. The report also briefly covers the lessons from 2008-9 financial crisis responses, that can show us how COVID-19 responses could affect the next 10 years and beyond. The full report can be accessed here.
Why the World Needs Nature in the Centre of Agenda after this Pandemic?

Rampant deforestation, uncontrolled expansion of agriculture, intensive farming, mining and infrastructure development, as well as the exploitation of wild species have created a ‘perfect storm’ for the spill over of diseases from wildlife to people.

Diseases like COVID-19 are caused by microorganisms that infect our bodies - with more than 70% of all emerging diseases affecting people having originated in wildlife and domesticated animals.

Our actions have significantly impacted more than three quarters of the Earth’s land surface, destroyed more than 85% of wetlands and dedicated more than a third of all land and almost 75% of available freshwater to crops and livestock production. Add to this the unregulated trade in wild animals and the explosive growth of global air travel and it becomes clear how a virus that has been perceived to have once circulated harmlessly among bats have now infected over 3 million people, brought untold human suffering and halted economies and societies around the world. This is the human hand in the emergence of this pandemic.

Although animal-to-human diseases already cause an estimated 700,000 deaths each year, the potential for future pandemics is vast. As many as 1.7 million unidentified viruses of the type known to infect people are believed to still exist in mammals and water birds. Any one of these could be the next ‘Disease X’ – potentially even more disruptive and lethal than COVID-19. It has been argued that future pandemics are likely to happen more frequently, spread more rapidly, have greater economic impact and kill more people if we are not extremely careful about the possible impacts of the choices we make today.

There are three important considerations that should be central to the multi-trillion-dollar recovery and economic stimulus plans already being implemented. First, we must ensure the strengthening and enforcement of environmental regulations – and direct the stimulus packages as incentives to those that offer sustainable and nature-positive activities.

Second, we should adopt a ‘One Health’ approach at all levels of decision-making – from the global to the most local – recognizing the complex interconnections among the health of people, animals, plants and our shared environment. Forestry Departments, for example, are typically involved with conservation and protection while the profits accrue largely to the private sector – but it is public health systems and local communities that often pay the price of such zoonotic disease outbreaks. A One Health approach would ensure that better decisions are made that take into account long-term costs and consequences of development actions – for people and nature.

Third, there is an urgent need to strengthen funding and resources for our health systems. This means mobilising resources to build health capacity in emerging disease hotspots – such as clinics; surveillance programs, especially in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and local communities; behavioural risk surveys; and specific intervention programs. It also entails offering viable and sustainable alternatives to high-risk economic activities and protecting the health of the most vulnerable. This is not simple altruism – it is vital investment in the interests of all to prevent future global outbreaks.

Adapted from “IPBES Guest Article: COVID-19 Stimulus Measures Must Save Lives, Protect Livelihoods, and Safeguard Nature to Reduce the Risk of Future Pandemics” authored by IPBES Experts Professors Josef Settele, Sandra Díaz and Eduardo Brondizio and Dr. Peter Daszak on 27 April 2020)
WHY DO WE MARK INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT DAYS?

International days are occasions to educate the general public on issues of concern, to mobilize political and corporate’s will and resources to address global environmental problems, and to celebrate and reinforce achievements of humanity. The nature is a never-ending concept but by discovering nature, one discovers itself!

MAY 8 - WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

IFAW-WTI’s Rapid Response Addresses Avian Emergency in Sambhar Lake

Humanity is dealing with mass deaths in some locations due to the COVID pandemic for many months. However, most may be unaware of a wildlife emergency that shook conservationists and bird lovers across India in November 2019, in which thousands of migratory birds were found dead or dying in Sambhar Lake, Rajasthan. This inland salt-water lake and a RAMSAR site, attracts a variety of wintering waterbirds. Mass scale mortalities started in November and with an exponential increase in the death figures every week, it was being touted as one of Asia’s largest bird catastrophes ever.

The images coming from the site of migratory birds lying dead on the lake floor could only be imagined out of horror films. India being a ratified partner to Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), was under a moral obligation to act. Considering the scale of this disaster, IFAW-Wildlife Trust of India mobilized a team of veterinarians, biologists, and bird handlers to the site to provide rapid response and relief, in partnership with government and non-government agencies.

Initially suspected to be Avian flu, it was later confirmed as a case of avian botulism, a paralytic yet fatal disease caused by the ingestion of the toxin produced by the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*, reported for the first time in India. During the month-long intervention, more than 1200 ailing birds of over 30 species were admitted. The veterinarians in the team provided supportive treatment and husbandry measures to improve release success. By ensuring best practices, the mortality of admitted birds was reduced and more than 500 birds that were found to be fit were released back to the wild.

The intervention was in collaboration with local NGOs and was supported by HCL Foundation and exemplifies the multipronged approach to Animal Inclusive Disaster Response and Risk Reduction (AiDRRR) during an avian emergency that can potentially wipe out an entire population of migratory birds.

To know more, write to Dr. Sandeep Tiwari, sandeep@wti.org.in.

Photo credit - Debobroto Sircar/IFAW-WTI
MAY 14- ENDEMIC BIRD DAY

The Narcondam Hornbill (*Rhyticeros narcondami*), is an endangered bird species endemic to India, specifically to the Narcondam island of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It is one of the smaller birds among the Hornbills and the current mature population is estimated to be between 50-250 individuals. Its habitat is forest and shrub lands. The major threats to the species are Residential & commercial development (Commercial & industrial areas), Agriculture & aquaculture (Annual & perennial non-timber crops), Biological resource use (Hunting & trapping terrestrial animals, Logging & wood harvesting), Invasive and other problematic species, genes & diseases (Invasive non-native/alien species/diseases, Diseases of unknown cause), Climate change & severe weather (Storms & flooding). Identify the birds near you and become a birder sitting at home. Access the information [here](#).

MAY-22 INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

The theme for this year is Our solutions are in nature! It emphasizes hope, solidarity and the importance of working together at all levels to build a future of life in harmony with nature. As a global community, we call corporates to re-examine the relation with the natural world and raise awareness.

**Did you know?**

- Current negative trends in biodiversity and ecosystems will undermine progress towards 80% of the assessed targets of the 8 Sustainable Development Goals.
- Three-quarters of the land-based environment and about 66% of the marine environment have been significantly altered by human actions.
- 1 million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction.

Source - [Convention on Biological Diversity](#)

MOVIE RECOMMENDATION–
THE RACE TO SAVE THE AMUR FALCON

In the state of Nagaland in India’s far northeast, a small team of conservationists discovered something that was both enthralling and alarming. They witnessed local hunters capture and slaughter tens of thousands of beautiful little raptors- The Amur falcons for consumption. This is the story of the investigative documentation that followed, and the campaign that was launched to save the migrating falcons. In a world where conservation successes are few and far between, this campaign to save the Amur falcon shows us how a small group of determined people can make a big difference.

The film by Mr. Shekar Dattatri won the Best Conservation Film (under 30-minutes) award in the CMS Vatavaran Wildlife and Environmental Film Festival, 2017.

ONLINE LEARNING WITH IUCN

- [IUCN WCEL Law and Environment Lectures](#)
- [IUCN CEM Ecosystem Restoration Webinars](#)
"It seems to me that the natural world is the greatest source of excitement; the greatest source of visual beauty; the greatest source of intellectual interest. It is the greatest source of so much in life that makes life worth living."
— David Attenborough.