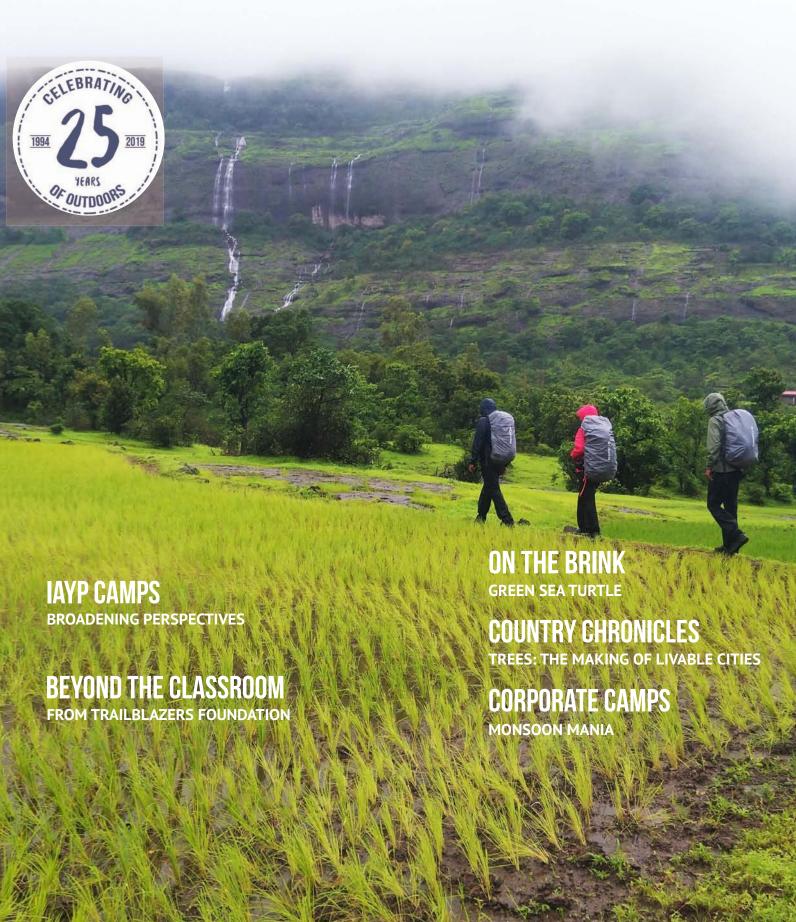
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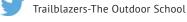
Beyond The Classroom





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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

The slash and burn technique used by farmers in Asia, Africa and South America came into the spotlight when day turned into night due to the extensive smoke plumes hanging over the city of Sao Paulo in Brazil. This created global outrage as the Amazon forest believed to be the lungs of the planet, was set ablaze by greedy farmers. The fires on the boundaries of the Amazon soon engulfed huge acreage of forest almost the size of the Australian mainland.

The Amazon is believed to have the most abundant and diverse biodiversity amongst all the rain forests of the world. This criminal act, maybe, done unwillingly by ignorant farmers puts the planet, its nearly 7 billion earthlings and billions of other species in grave danger from which coming back maybe difficult.

What caused this? And why so much global outrage considering this goes on unabated in the USA, Europe and Australia through natural process of lightning or some man-made indulgence. This technique is also practiced in Africa and in Asia as a normal farming method to clear the land for agriculture or due to plain indifference. The burning of palm oil plantations causing havoc in adjoining countries is a normal concern year after year.

The Amazon like most forests, is a carbon sink, swallowing tonnes of carbon di oxide from the planet and releasing oxygen. It is the biggest forest on the planet. As I have often said the increasing population globally pushes people to forest lands for their living. As I write this the people in Mumbai are confronting the government to stop clearing a patch in the Aarey milk complex part of the Sanjay Gandhi national park. The Government proposes to build a multi-storey office and a maintenance shed for the Mumbai metro trains. I don't understand the logic of cutting down age old natural forests to give way to a car shed and offi ce complex in the name of development and commit to the court that they will plant 5 extra trees for the ones they are cutting down. Neither do I comprehend the old age idea of creating a zoological park when you have its flourishing natural version right next door. Having no room to manoeuvre in the city, developers look to the only available open space, the Sanjay Gandhi National park. For the past 40 years a trend has been observed wherein the National Park is the target of developers and a sustained effort is being made to seize it. A growing city demands for growing needs and in this vicious cycle it is the green spaces and wildlife that is suffering.

This conflict of interest, man's greed vs man's need is the bane of our forests worldwide. The Amazon is impacted because of the overarching demand for beef meat in the USA and Europe. Farmers want pastures to raise their cattle as well as for grazing so that they can export them as beef for huge money. The rainforests of Indonesia that are biodiversity hotspots are being cleared to accommodate palm plantations.

So, the story of human greed at the cost of our future generations continues. Till when will the rampant destruction of life harbouring habitats continue? When will the greed of the human species be satisfied? The signs are all around us, changing weather patterns, increased droughts and desertification, extinction of species.

Bhutan is a happy state because it has protected its green cover, its culture and thereby their identity. Can we follow a similar path despite our large population?

WAKE UP! Rise, ask, demand, seek the protection of our green cover worldwide.

Join Trailblazers camps to learn and see more. Join the Trailblazers Foundation to discuss, debate and prepare a blueprint for survival. We can and we will.

Ranjan Biswas

Editor- Ecotrail | Managing Director - Trailblazers Adventure Travel Pvt Ltd | Trustee-Trailblazers Foundation

GREEN SEA TURTLE



Image Courtesy: Zoya Tyabji

If you have watched the movie Finding Nemo, then you must be familiar with this species of turtle. Crush, the turtle is a green sea turtle. These species are found off the coast of the Andaman and Nicobar Archipelago. The extensive beaches act as a suitable nesting site for these turtles.

An interesting fact about green turtles is that unlike other sea turtles they are largely herbivorous. Their diet consists of sea grasses and algae, occasionally they feed on invertebrates such as crustaceans and jellyfish. This is not why it is called 'green' sea turtle though; it gets its name from the green fat found under its carapace. Like all sea turtles, the females migrate long distances to lay their eggs. They can lay up to 200 eggs at once! The hatchlings then have to make it back to the ocean on their own. Once they turn into adults, these turtles will come back to the same nesting site when it is time for them to lay eggs.

The main threats to turtles are those posed by humans. They often get caught in fishing lines and as bycatch of trawling ships. In some regions the adults are hunted for their meat and the eggs are harvested. Apart from this, threats to their nesting sites in the form of land reclamation has caused a drop to their numbers. They are currently listed as endangered by the IUCN.

Conservation efforts are on globally to help these marine reptiles. A lot of NGOs conduct citizen awareness programmes and beach clean ups to help restore their habitat. A ban on trawlers in certain ecosensitive areas near the islands helps in preventing accidental death of the turtles. Following these actions, the future for green sea turtles seems a little brighter.

DISCUSSING DESERTIFICATION

India hosted a meeting of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in the month of September 2019 in Greater Noida. This meeting is the 14th one since the inception of the UNCCD in 1994. The agenda for the meeting was to discuss and come up with policies that will help reduce the phenomenon of desertification.

Around the world, fertile agricultural lands are slowly degrading and reducing in productivity. There are several causes for this, both manmade and natural. The immediate impact of this is seen not only on the ecosystem supporting ability of the land but also on the livelihoods of thousands. Researchers revealed at the conference that at least three to four species of Indian animals such as the Indian Cheetah, Pink Headed Duck and Indian Bustard have gone extinct due to desertification. Not only is this phenomenon a natural disaster but it is has also become an important factor in increasing the percentage of rural poverty.

Over 9000 participants from member countries signed the Delhi declaration at the end of the 10 day session. At the closing of COP14, UNCCD Executive Secretary, Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw shared these takeaway messages:

- Land restoration is the cheapest solution to climate change and biodiversity loss
- Land restoration makes business sense if regulations and incentives to reward investment are in place
- Drought preparedness and response are critical in the face of climate change
- •To put people first is to ensure gender balance, engage youth, secure land rights

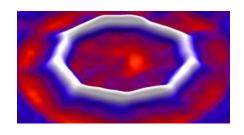
Following the principles of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) the UNCCD urges to countries to invest in land degradation neutrality to eradicate poverty and inequality.

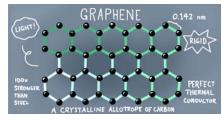


FIRST STABLE RING OF CARBON CREATED

A recent study published in Science describes the work of chemists from the Oxford University and IBM Labs from Zurich on creating the first stable ring of pure Carbon. This 18 atom structure, termed as cyclocarbon is more reactive and less stable than graphene or diamond.

A subtraction approach was adopted to create this molecule, where scientists took out atoms from a larger structure rather than adding on to a smaller structure. This was done in a high vacuum chamber by a process called atom manipulation. The use of this novel molecule is yet to be studied but its similarity to graphene, may cause it to be used as a semi-conductor. This research has however opened doors for further research into the synthesis of new carbon allotropes.





TREES: THE MAKING OF LIVEABLE CITIES

Janjri Jasasni from Centre for Environmental Research and Education (CERE) on greening the urban jungle.

People do not love trees as much as they used to and recently everyone from your local corporator to the cantankerous auntie next door is looking for an excuse to cut them down leaving sad little stumps in the place of expansive branches and lush canopies. And it's true, during the monsoons especially, trees can be a problem – on especially windy days their branches can snap and pose a threat to people, buildings and cars. But the truth is that urban trees are far more important than we give them credit for, in fact, its trees that make our cities liveable.

Trees are our green infrastructure and unlike our grey concrete and metal buildings, roads, pipes, and footpaths the value of trees continues to grow over their lifetime. Trees provide a staggering number of ecological and sociological services with real financial implications. In addition to producing oxygen, trees also sequester carbon dioxide and so help mitigate climate change. They also significantly improve air quality by absorbing gaseous pollutants like ozone, nitrogen and oxides through leaf surfaces and intercepting particulate matter like dust, dirt, ash and pollen in the air.



Citizens ensuring a greener tomorrow

They also help moderate the local climate by providing shade and controlling humidity and temperature through the process of transpiration. A single healthy tree can have the same cooling effect as ten air conditioners. By reducing temperatures, trees also help reduce the energy costs of the buildings adjacent to them - a well-shaded building can have energy bills that are 15-35% lower. If you've ever complained about flooding in your area, then stop and grow a tree because trees are remarkable at absorbing moisture and reducing the burden on our urban drainage infrastructure. Trees absorb over 30% of most precipitation through their leaf systems and through their root structures and the ground surrounding them. Some

of this water naturally percolates into the groundwater and some is gradually evaporated back into the atmosphere by the tree.



CERE plantation site in Titwala

If you have ever enjoyed the song of the Koel or marvelled at the antics of the Indian Palm Squirrel, you can thank a tree for giving them a home. In fact, trees are important habitats for a number of different species that call cities their homes. Protecting and fostering this urban biodiversity is essential to the overall well-being of our urban ecosystems. Trees act as sources of food and shelter for important pollinating species such as bats, birds and bees and also support populations of reptiles and amphibians that are important natural controls of disease-carrying vectors such as rodents and mosquitoes.

The social and economic impacts of trees in urban environments, while hard to quantify, are significant. These benefits include urban farming, beautification and enhanced aesthetics, privacy, shade (which increases human comfort), and the creation of a sense of place and well-being among urbanites. Trees have also been credited with improving human health, reducing crime and noise pollution, and increasing community interactions. There is even evidence to suggest the urban trees reduce the incidence of road accidents by having a calming influence on drivers and by creating well-defined medians and footpaths. A study by the Parks department found that if you accounted for all the positive impacts of all the trees in New York city the benefits added up to Rs. 856 crore a year.

Trees are thus a critical component of cities and for the last five years Centre for Environmental Research and Education (CERE), an environmental non-profit based in Mumbai, has been planting thousands of native Indian tree species in urban and peri-urban areas across the country. To date, CERE, along

with its partners and sponsors, has planted 1,16,198 trees. The trees are distributed against 71 locations and 107 species and will sequester over 12,602 metric tonnes (MT) of carbon dioxide over their lifetimes. We have planted common avenue trees like Neem and Ashoka and rare forest species like Red Indian Sandalwood and Rudraksha. We have also planted species that help farmers generate additional income like Mango and Amla and species that attract wildlife like the mighty Banyan and the Red Silk Cotton.



CERE's Chandan Mulhekar demonstrate how to transplant a sapling in the ground

CERE's Urban Afforestation Program (UAP) is a platform through which companies and private citizens can facilitate the development of green spaces within their urban community. If you want to know more about this program, visit http://uap.cere-india.org/.



Employees from IndusInd Bank attend a plantation drive

The Centre for Environment Research and Education, based in Mumbai is a pioneer in the field of corporate sustainability and carbon management systems. Established in 2002 by Dr. (Ms.) Rashneh N. Pardiwala, an ecologist from the University of Edinburgh and Mrs. Kitayun Rustom, an environmental educationist. CERE has successfully completed projects in both urban and rural India.

HIKING HEROS

Trailblazers in partnership with Decathlon Bangalore introduces young minds to the wonders of the outdoors

Every city has some exquisite natural sites around them that are rarely explored. In an effort to get people and children to take a breather from the chaos of the city, Trailblazers in partnership with Decathlon has started a series of hikes to these places. After a successful run in Mumbai, Bangalore was our next target for the Backyard Trails and a special programme for children, called hiking heroes.

On a pleasant morning in the month of July, young adventurers in the city of Bangalore were ready to experience their first hike. Ranging from the age of 8 to 13-year olds, these children were prepared to spend a Sunday devoid of gadgets and just enjoy the natural beauty around them. The group set off in the wee hours of the morning and started their journey up the rocky terrain. While they were hiking up, the Trailblazers experts showed them some common butterfly species. The children were also told about the history of the area.

Once they reached the top, they were taught the basics of compass reading and map making. Using the tips, they had just learned, the students made very creative maps of their surroundings. Once the maps were done it was time for some fun games. Even after an hour of hiking the energy levels were super high. It was all smiles and laughter, as the children played in the refreshing outdoors.

After a day well spent connecting with nature, the group received mementos and a certificate for having successfully completed their first hiking heroes programme. Even though the hike was a long one, these bravehearts never complained and were ever ready to come for the next adventure.



Trailblazers regales the participants with fun riddles



Making their way up the granite hills on Bangalore



Nothing enhances the bonds of friendship like team games!



Explorers in the making!

PUSHING BOUNDARIES - AN IAYP EXPERIENCE

Trailblazers creates a positive change in IAYP campers with an adventure camp in the Sahyadris

A great way to build life skills in students, is to expose them to the wonders of the outdoors. This is one of the ideologies that our company is built on. With 21st century skills becoming an essential learning dispositions, schools have started making inclusions in their curriculum for outdoor programmes. The IAYP (International Award for Young People) is one such avenue where students are taken to a challenging environment and made to participate in adventurous activities.

Trailblazers conducted an IAYP camp for the silver and gold level students of a prominent school. The students were taken to a breathtaking campsite near the Sahyadris to get them closer to nature. A lot of them were not used to outdoorsy activities and the itinerary brought out qualities in them that they never knew they had. The adventure activities conducted immensely helped in confidence building and curing phobias. An overnight stay in a village instilled in them a sense of empathy and gratitude. A trek to the top of a fort to watch the sunset, allowed the otherwise boisterous

group to reflect on everything around them and enjoy the moment.

Adventure activities such as wall climbing, rappelling, hiking and kayaking made sure the students achieved their goals for the silver and gold levels of the IAYP. The students also put up informative street plays about waste management, education and hygiene during their stay in the village as part of a community service activity.

The students all agreed that by the end of the 7-day camp they had all changed for the better. To make their memories precious, the camp counsellors made sure that there were several team games that would help the students improve their interpersonal skills. Finally, when the day came for them to return, tears were shed, selfies taken and the group wished for the camp to be extended. It was an unforgettable camp for both the student group and the Trailblazers team, set in the spectacular background of the mighty Sahyadris.



Competing in a fun game of Tug-of-War



Getting out of their comfort zone through Kayaking



Students testing their agility on the Obstacle Course



Students enjoying a pleasant sunset

MONSOON MAGIC

Life in a metropolitan city such as Mumbai is really fast paced and often citizens of this city miss out on spending quality time with their loved ones, an essential need for any happy family. The senior management of a large conglomerate wanted to ensure that their employees could spend a memorable Sunday with their families and reboot their enthusiasm and drive. Trailblazers gladly took over the responsibility bringing their vision to life with a one-day camp for a group of over 250 employees and their families at a popular resort near Mumbai. Being the monsoons, it was an ideal time to be in the outdoors and enjoy the weather.

Participants from many different parts of the city joined us for a power packed onward journey. No journey is complete without the singing of old tunes, catching up on old memories and a whole lot of laughter. Once we arrived at the destination, to kick-start the day, Trailblazers welcomed the participants with a flash mob. Having briefed the participants about the day's agenda, the first activity was icebreakers for the entire group of 250! The roars of laughter filled the entire resort as people slowly began to shed their inhibitions. The thought behind the whole programme was to keep everyone from the oldest to the youngest participant engaged. A variety of sports, team games and challenges were planned that attracted different age groups.



Decoding hand-writing with Trailblazers



Participants taking a dip in a waterfall after an informative nature trail







Children having fun in various art and creativity activities



Face painting activity by Trailblazers experts

Post lunch, a fun game of Housie kept the adults occupied while the children were free to participate in different stalls set up by the Trailblazers team. This included a photo booth, rock art, face painting, a nail bar and a graphology stall. Excited to visit all the stalls, participants queued up in glee! Every event needs a big finale, for the monsoon magic camp it was the Fashion Show! A riot of colours and fabrics participants got their swagger on and walked down the ramp with panache. A vibrant and spirited dance party followed, where everyone showcased their moves and enjoyed themselves without inhibition. The dancing session saw the entire team of participants and Trailblazers come together to shake a leg.

Moments like these spent with people close to you are worth capturing. One of the most difficult tasks for the day was getting the entire group to fit in the same frame for a group photo. At Trailblazers we believe in leaving a place greener than we found it. To mark the 25th year of Trailblazers, there was one last thing to be done – a planting of a sapling. The children got together and planted a healthy Mango sapling, a species native to the habitat.

The participants went home with some amazing memories and most importantly having spent a precious moments with friends and family in the refreshing outdoors.

FORT SUMMIT

"The hills are alive with the sound of music With songs they have sung for a thousand years The hills fill my heart with the sound of music My heart wants to sing every song it hears.

These are the famous lyrics from the classic movie, Sound of Music. In Maharashtra, the Sahyadris, come alive every year with the onset of the monsoons. This makes it the best season for hikes and treks. Recently, Trailblazers team conducted a trek to the glorious Harishchandragad fort for Columbia athletes who came from different parts of the country. Being skilled in outdoor sports, the participants were excited to be trekking in the Sahyadris, as this was the first time exploring this terrain. Having the curiosity of a child, they were delighted to learn more about the geography and history of the region.

As the team moved towards the summit, they navigated their way through waterfalls, streams, caves, meadows, scenic cliffs, dense foliage and sublime mist all while soaking up the refreshing monsoon showers. This was also an ideal scenario for them to test their Columbia Sports monsoon gear, and their experience was exceptional.

One notable aspect of the trek was the humility all the athletes possessed. Being experts in their own fields in the outdoors, team spirit, the motivation to keep moving and their zest for life was brimming in their every gesture. The trek was all

about making the best out of limited resources and appreciating nature. This trek really inspired us as we witnessed how spending more time in the outdoors brings out the best of human emotions like empathy, humility, gratitude and positivity.



Happy hikers after completing a hike in the misty Sahyadris

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



OUTDOOR HACKS

Protecting and preventing your camping gear from the rains:

- Always start with cleaning your gear. Most camping gear already has a layer of Durable Water Repellent (DWR) sprayed on it. However, dirt, dust and chemicals can interfere with the bonds. You can always test the effectiveness of the water repellent by spraying the item with water. If you see water beads, DWR is intact, if it soaks up the DWR needs to be reapplied.
- Check the seams of tents, jackets, bags before starting your trip. Don't get too emotional if it's beyond repair. Bubbling or flaking on the inside of the material are signs that it's starting to come apart and can't be fixed.
- Wet shoes? Try stuffing them with newspaper and keep them wrapped in newspaper and then place it in front of a heat source. The paper helps to absorb all the moisture.
- For a quick way to waterproof boots, you can apply a light layer of beeswax or similar material.
- Don't know what to do with all the plastic that's in your house post the ban? Use it to wrap your electronics and clothes. Be responsible and get it back, don't leave it in the outdoors!
- If you are vehemently against the use of plastic, keep rain covers and dry bags handy.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

As schools settle into the new academic year, Trailblazers Foundation conducted the 2nd edition of 'Beyond The Classroom', a series of workshops on Outdoor Education for teachers and principals. This year, the workshop was extended to include the city of Pune apart from Hyderabad.

The theme for the event was 21st Century Skills and the Outdoors. Humankind has progressed through 3 different Ages, from the Stone Age to the Agricultural Age, to the Industrial Age. As we finally enter the Information Age, the world we live in has changed drastically, and is changing every hour. It is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. The generation growing up will require different skills to flourish in this world, identified as 21st century skills.

21st century skills comprise skills, abilities, and learning dispositions that have been identified as being required for success in 21st century society and workplaces. Some of the world's best companies like Apple, Dell and Microsoft have together with the National Education Association, USA, identified 12 such essential skills.

These skills differ from traditional academic skills in that they are not primarily content knowledge based. Hence, it may be difficult to develop these skills in the four walls of a classroom, and thus there is an increasing thrust on Outdoor Education world-wide.

The Teacher's Workshop conducted on 2nd August 2019 in Pune and 21st August 2019 in Hyderabad provided teachers with simple outdoor modules related to the curriculum that help in the development of 21st century skills. These were followed by a Principals' Summit, held on 3rd August 2019, in Pune and 22nd August 2019 in Hyderabad.

In Pune, our chief guest, Mr. Jayraman spoke about the importance of the 21st century skills in the corporate world and how having these skills increases the chances of successful job interviews for candidates. Ms. Ruchira Ghosh, Principal of Sancta Maria International School and ex-South Asian Regional Director of IGCSE, addressed the summit on how the outdoors can bring about essential life skills and emotions in students.

Trailblazers Foundation along with Trailblazers Adventure Travel Pvt. Ltd. also released a compendium on Outdoor Education, titled Beyond The Classroom. This book is a compilation of emerging ideas of principals from the cities of Bangalore, Kolkata and Hyderabad on Outdoor Education and its integration into the school curriculum.



Beyond the Classroom Compendium release at the Principals' Summit in Hyderabad



Demonstration of an outdoor module on science



Beyond the Classrom Principal's Summit in Pune



Beyond The Classroom Hyderabad participants



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