

## NATURAL HERITAGE BULLETIN

Information and Updates from World Natural Heritage Sites in Asia and the Pacific Region

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Udayan Borthakur

MANAS NATIONAL PARK (MNP), INDIA

**UNESCO Category 2 Centre for World Natural Heritage  
Management and Training for Asia and the Pacific Region,  
Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun. India**

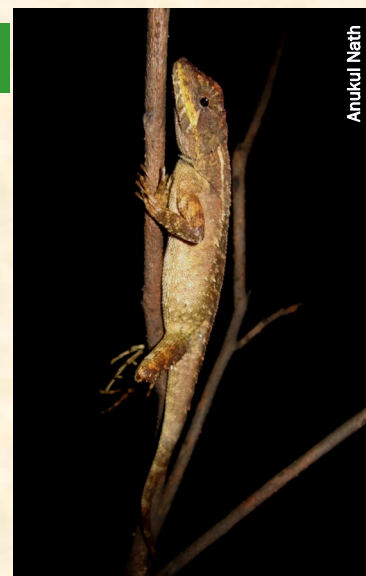
The Natural Heritage Bulletin is a compilation of information on World Natural Heritage Sites in the Asia-Pacific Region which is obtained from free and publicly available sources such as the internet, newspapers and other publications. The publisher of this bulletin does not make any claim on the authenticity of the contents of the secondary sources of information. The information does not necessarily represent any official views of the publishing institution.

## FROM THE EDITORS' DESK

We are happy to launch the second edition of our Natural Heritage Bulletin and it is indeed an honour that the timing coincides with the 39<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee at Bonn. Fingers crossed for the inscription of the 8 sites from the Asia-Pacific that are currently on the tentative list.

We also pay homage to the people and monuments affected in the Nepal earthquake by dedicating this bulletin to Disaster Risk reduction and mitigation. While Natural World Heritage Sites can get severely impacted by disasters, they also have a potential to reduce the risk of disasters due to presence of forests

and wilderness areas that act as a buffer to natural calamities. An ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy that highlights the importance of Natural World Heritage Sites can therefore play an important role towards suggesting a regional/national level mitigation and adaptation strategy. The C2C at Wildlife Institute of India is therefore also gearing up for a unique workshop and training in which we would like to introduce this theme for Natural World Heritage Site Managers in the Asia-Pacific Region. More details about the workshop and more in the following pages...



Anukul Nath

Japalura variegata, MNP

## UNESCO REGIONAL NEWS

## World Heritage Committee Session 2015

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee will examine proposals to inscribe 37 properties on UNESCO's World Heritage List when it meets at the international conference centre of Bonn (Germany) from 28 June to 8 July. The upcoming 39th session of the World Heritage Committee will be chaired by Maria Böhmer, Minister of State at Germany's Federal Foreign Office, and member of the Bundestag. Three of the five natural sites are nominated for inscription

on the World Heritage List this year are from Asia and the Pacific Region, which include:

- Landscapes of Dauria (Mongolia/Russian Federation)
- Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex (Thailand)
- Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park [extension of Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park] (Viet Nam)

<http://whc.UNESCO.org/en/news/1288>

*“Three natural sites from Asia-Pacific nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2015.”*

## Malaysia to head UNESCO's Natural Science Commission

Malaysia has been appointed to chair the natural Sciences Commission (SC) for the coming 38th UNESCO General Conference in Paris. The conference, which will be held between Nov 3 and Nov 18, will be represented by the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry Secretary General, Datuk Seri Dr Noorul Ainur Mohd Nur as the Chairperson of the SC Commission. Malaysia will be joined by other appointed chairpersons from Africa, Lebanon, Lithuania, Trinidad and Tobago and Britain. According to a ministry statement, the appointment of

Malaysia as the chairperson of the SC will enhance the country's visibility in UNESCO and at the same time strengthen its bid to be on UNESCO's Executive Board for the 2015-2019 term. The Commission, among others will address matters on the drafting of programmes and preparing the budget for the science sector. This includes major programmes related to science for peace and sustainable development and the UNESCO Global Geoparks Initiative.

[www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2015/04/26/Msia-to-chair-UNESCOs-Natural-Science-Commission/](http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2015/04/26/Msia-to-chair-UNESCOs-Natural-Science-Commission/)



Anukul Nath

One-horned Rhino, *Rhinoceros unicornis*, MNP



## Marine World Heritage Sites and International Maritime Organisation

The International Maritime Organization (IMO)—the United Nations specialized agency with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine pollution by ships—can provide special protections for “Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas” (PSSA) to reduce their vulnerability to damage from International Maritime activities. Presently World Heritage sites comprise, or protect waters adjacent to, six of the 14 PSSAs worldwide, including Great Barrier Reef

(Australia) in the Asia-Pacific region. The World Heritage Committee recognizes the potential threats posed by increased shipping activity and is working with World Heritage sites to secure special protections where needed most urgently. The IMO met in London from 11 to 15 May 2015, and the World Heritage Marine Programme was there to support the governments of the Philippines and Mauritania in obtaining better protection against maritime pollution for their respective World Heritage sites.

<http://whc.UNESCO.org/en/news/1284>



Abhijit Das

Mock viper  
*Psammodynastes pulverulentus*, MNP

## New Sites under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB)

The International Co-ordinating Council of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) has added 20 new sites to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, bringing their total number to 651 sites, including 15 trans-boundary sites, in 120 countries. These additions were made by the Council during a meeting taking place in Paris from 8 to 12 June, 2015. New sites from Asia-Pacific included Hanma Biosphere reserve

(People's Republic of China), Bromo Tengger Semeru-Arjuno Biosphere Reserve (Indonesia), Taka Bonerate-Kepulauan Selayar Biosphere Reserve (Indonesia), Aksu-Zhabagly Biosphere Reserve (Kazakhstan), Inlay Lake Biosphere Reserve (Myanmar) and Langbiang Biosphere Reserve (Viet Nam).

[http://www.UNESCO.org/new/en/natural-sciences/about-us/single-view/news/twenty\\_new\\_sites\\_added\\_to\\_UNESCOs\\_world\\_network\\_of\\_biosphere\\_reserves/#.VYro9Ea8ySK](http://www.UNESCO.org/new/en/natural-sciences/about-us/single-view/news/twenty_new_sites_added_to_UNESCOs_world_network_of_biosphere_reserves/#.VYro9Ea8ySK)

*“Six new sites from Asia-Pacific added to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves under UNESCO's Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme.”*

## ASIA-PACIFIC SITE UPDATES

### Crucial decision on Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef should not go on a World Heritage in Danger list, according to a United Nations draft report. However, it says Australia must carry out commitments to protect the reef, including restoring water quality and restricting new port developments. The final decision on its status will be made at the World Heritage Committee meeting in Germany in June-July, 2015. In 2015, Australia submitted a plan to the UN heritage body, UNESCO, outlining how it would address these threats. This included a proposed

objective of reducing pollution by 80% before 2025, as well as reversing a decision to allow dredged material to be dumped near the reef. The Great Barrier Reef was given World Heritage status in 1981. It is a vast collection of thousands of smaller coral reefs spans, stretching from the northern tip of Queensland to the state's southern city of Bundaberg. The UN says this is the “most biodiverse” of its World Heritage sites, and that is of “enormous scientific and intrinsic importance”.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/scienceenvironment32932205>



Anukul Nath

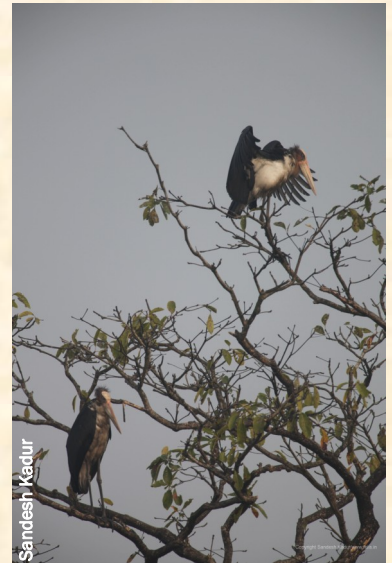
Beki River, MNP

## Mayon Volcano National Park as UNESCO Site

Legazpi city's 'Majestic Mayon', the world's most perfect cone volcano and Albay's crown jewel in tourism, has made it to the tentative list of most promising candidates for a World Heritage Site title of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Designated as Mayon Volcano National Park (MMVNP) by Presidential Proclamation No. 413 in June 2000 under the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act, it becomes the first area in the Bicol Region to be included in the UNESCO March 2015 updated tentative list.

Mt. Mayon is one of the Philippines' most featured land forms. Mayon Volcano towers at 2,462 meters above sea level and is popular for its perfectly conical shape whose natural beauty has inspired a number of legends. It is the most active volcano in the Philippines and one of the most active in the world, having erupted over 51 times in the past four centuries, creating a culture of resiliency among its inhabitants.

[www.interaksyon.com/article/109634/mayon-volcano-on-tentative-list-of-UNESCO-world-heritage-sites](http://www.interaksyon.com/article/109634/mayon-volcano-on-tentative-list-of-UNESCO-world-heritage-sites)



Sandesh Kadur

Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilus javanicus*, MNP

## Nepal's Heritage Sites affected by Earthquake

According to UNESCO's preliminary assessment on the ground, the monuments and sites within the Kathmandu Valley World Heritage property, as well as several other cultural and natural heritage sites located in the area, have been heavily affected by the earthquake which struck Nepal. In particular, Durbar Squares of Patan, Hanuman Dhoka (Kathmandu) and Bhaktapur are almost fully destroyed.

Nepal's Natural Heritage, in particular the World Heritage site of Sagarmatha National Park, including Mount Everest, has also been severely affected by the earthquake. Minimal impact has been found to the World heritage site of Lumbini, the Birthplace of the Lord Buddha (1997), and Chitwan National Park (1984).

<http://whc.UNESCO.org/en/news/1268> ]

## Recommendation for Singapore Botanic Gardens

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) on Friday (May 15) recommended that the Singapore Botanic Gardens be inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. In its report to the World Heritage Committee, ICOMOS noted that Singapore considered Singapore Botanic Gardens to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property. Some of the reasons cited include the garden being a well defined cultural landscape, and that since 1875, it has continued to be a leading centre in plant science, research and conservation in Southeast Asia.

"ICOMOS considers that the significance of the Singapore Botanic Gardens as an exceptional example of a British tropical colonial botanic garden in Southeast Asia, and an illustration of interchanges of values connected to ideas, knowledge and expertise in tropical and economic botany and horticulture." The ICOMOS' recommendation will be taken into consideration by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, and a final decision will be announced in Bonn, Germany, in July, 2015.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/singaporebotanicgardens/1849404.html> ]

*"With 95% of disasters linked to water-related hazards, it is possible to reduce disaster risks by managing wetlands sustainably. (Ms. Jane Madgwick, CEO Wetlands International)."*

## Sunderbans Oil Spill

The World Heritage Committee has expressed alarm over a massive oil spill in the Bangladeshi side of the Sunderbans — a world heritage site — and asked Bengal and Dhaka to join hands in a "transboundary agreement" to protect the world's most spectacular mangroves. As of now, the Sunderbans World Heritage site of Bangladesh and Sunderbans National Park of India are two separate entities. The commission suggests a cross border pitch to make the

area a "single entry on the world heritage list". UNESCO has also asked Bangladesh for a report on the impact the December 9, 2014, oil tanker accident has had on the environment.

[economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/environment/florafauna/globalconcernforsunderbans/articleshow/47561138.cms](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/environment/florafauna/globalconcernforsunderbans/articleshow/47561138.cms) ]



Deba Kumar Dutta

Kayaking practice at Beki river, MNP



## New Criteria for Viet Nam's Phong NhaKe Bang World Heritage Site

**H**O CHI MINH CITY, June 14 (Xinhua) VietNam's Phong NhaKe Bang National Park, which boasts the world's largest cave Son Doong, will be recognized next month as a World Heritage site for the second time by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), local online newspaper Tuoi Tre (Youth) News reported Sunday. The second recognition is

based on the park's stunning biological diversity and resplendent landscape, he said. The park first earned the honour in 2003 for its astounding geological and geomorphologic values.

<http://www.globalpost.com/article/6581636/2015/06/14/vietnamsphongnhakebanggetUNESCOrecognitionagain>

## Phillipines's Coral Reef Site gets New Management Plan

**T**he Philippines' Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park is a spectacular reef system in the famed Coral Triangle. The park encompasses 970 km<sup>2</sup> of coral atolls and deep seas 92 nautical miles from the nearest inhabited island. Managing this vast and remote area requires a focused management plan, and the Marine World Heritage Programme recently connected Site Manager Angelique Songco with Jon Day, previously of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, to strengthen the site's planning and evaluation tools. The reefs were protected in

1988 as the Philippines' first marine national park, and inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1993. In 2009, Jessie Beazley Reef, some 12 nautical miles to the north, was annexed to the Park. Site manager Angelique Songco recently worked with Jon Day, formerly one of the Directors of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, to ensure the site's management plan reflects its Outstanding Universal Value, and develop a new framework for assessing management effectiveness.

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1258/>

## WORLD HERITAGE OUTLOOK

### Australian Fossil Mammal Sites, Australia (Inscribed in 1994), Criteria viii and ix

#### Conservation Outlook: Good

**R**iversleigh and Naracoorte, situated in the north and south respectively of eastern Australia, are among the world's 10 greatest fossil sites. They are a superb illustration of the key stages of evolution of Australia's unique fauna. The property contains and protects extensive vertebrate fossil deposits which provide a significant insight to the understanding of the record of life in Australia during some major stages of Earth's

history. The history of mammal lineages in modern Australia can be traced through these fossil deposits and, as a consequence, there is a better understanding of the conservation status of living mammals and their communities. (SoOUV, 2012). While a number of threats and other issues affecting the site exist they are all minor and do not impact upon the Outstanding Universal Value of the Property. The current state of the AFMS World Heritage values is good and stable.

[http://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org/search-sites/-/wdpaid/en/61604?p\\_auth=BQtDK0SX](http://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org/search-sites/-/wdpaid/en/61604?p_auth=BQtDK0SX)

### Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks, India (Inscribed in 1998), Criteria vii and x

#### Conservation Outlook: Good with Some Concerns

**N**estled high in West Himalaya, India's Valley of Flowers National Park is re-

nowned for its meadows of endemic alpine flowers and outstanding natural beauty. This richly diverse area is also home to rare and endangered animals, including the Asiatic black bear, snow leopard, brown bear and blue sheep. The gentle landscape of the Valley of Flowers National Park complements the rugged mountain wilderness of Nanda Devi National Park. Together they encompass a unique transition zone between the mountain ranges of the



Tawny cat snake *Boiga ochracea*, MNP

*"The 10-year international disaster risk reduction plan, The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA) - Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, is the inspiration for knowledge, practice, implementation, experience and the science for disaster risk reduction (UNISDR)."*



Grassland woodland mosaic, MNP

Zaskar and Great Himalaya, praised by mountaineers and botanists for over a century and in Hindu mythology for much longer. The level of current threats to the site is low; however, development of hydroelectric projects in the vicinity or in the buffer zone, particularly, the cumulative impacts of various

projects are of high concern and need to be considered during planning and approval stages of each project.

[http://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org/search-sites/-/wdpaid/en/16793?p\\_p\\_auth=5PW5PGbE](http://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org/search-sites/-/wdpaid/en/16793?p_p_auth=5PW5PGbE)

## SPECIAL FEATURE: DISASTER AND WORLD HERITAGE SITES

### Disaster Risk Reduction

World Heritage properties, are exposed to Natural (flood, drought, earthquake, Tsunami etc.) and Man-made (forest fires, armed conflicts, industrial accidents, mass refugee movements etc.) disasters which threaten their integrity and may compromise their natural values.

Apart from having potential ecological effects, the loss or deterioration of outstanding values for which the sites were inscribed on the World Heritage List would have negative socio-cultural and economic impacts. World Heritage properties do not have any established policy, plan or process for managing, i.e. reducing, risks associated with potential disasters. Moreover, existing national and local disaster preparedness and response mechanisms usually do not include heritage expertise in their operations. As a result, hun-

dreds of sites are virtually defenceless with respect to potential disasters, and communities worldwide are not exploiting the full potential of their heritage, both tangible and intangible, that have maintained it over the centuries, and therefore, essential towards prevention and mitigation of disasters.

The revised Strategy for Risk Reduction at World Heritage Properties as formulated in 2007, The UN-Hyogo Framework For Action Priority 4 and the UN World Conference WCDRR in Sendai, Japan in March 2015 recognised the role of Protected Areas as an instrument for ecosystem-based adaptation to Disasters and Climate Change. Natural World Heritage Sites exemplify this role by adding the dimension of traditional values, ecosystem integrity, and hence contribute immensely to this strategy.

### SENDAI OUTCOMES

The third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction at Sendai, Japan was attended by 187 UN member States wherein they adopted the first major agreement of the Post-2015 development agenda, a far reaching new framework for disaster risk reduction with seven targets and four priorities for action. **The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction** outlines seven global targets to be achieved over the next 15 years: a substantial reduction in global disaster mortality; a substantial reduc-

tion in numbers of affected people; a reduction in economic losses in relation to global GDP; substantial reduction in disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, including health and education facilities; an increase in the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020; enhanced international cooperation; and increased access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments.

### GLOBAL CLIMATE RISK INDEX 2015

A recent report by GERMANWATCH (<https://germanwatch.org/en/download/10333.pdf>) titled 'Global Climate Risk Index 2015- Who suffers Most from extreme weather events? Weather-

related loss events in 2013 and 1994 to 2013' analyses to what extent countries have been affected by the impact of weather related loss events (Storms, floods, heat waves, etc.). The analysis is based on empirical data available for a period of 19 years. Interestingly, the most affected countries existed in the Asia-Pacific region, with Philippines, Cambodia and India topping the list in 2013.



Tiger pugmark, MNP

*"A final priority calls for more effective disaster preparedness and embedding the 'build back better' principle into recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. These will be the four points of the DRR compass for the next 15 years (Ambassador Päivi Kairamo from Finland at the Sendai Conference)."*



Nepal earthquake



Similarly, for the period from 1994 to 2013 Honduras, Myanmar and Haiti ranked the highest on the Climate Risk Index. The report suggests that less developed countries are generally more affected than industrialised countries and that already existing

vulnerability may further increase in regions where extreme events will become more frequent or more severe due to climate change.

## Nepal Earthquake and World Heritage Sites

The 25 April, 2015 Nepal earthquake (also called Gorkha earthquake) of 7.8 Magnitude occurred with an epicentre 77 km (48 miles) northwest of Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, that is home to nearly 1.5 million inhabitants, and at a focal depth of approximately 10-15 km. This earthquake was the one of the most powerful earthquakes to strike Nepal since the 1934 Nepal-Bihar earthquake. Based on the information by the United Nations, eight million people have been affected by the massive 2015 earthquake in Nepal, more than a quarter of the Nepal's population. More than 8,800 people were killed and twenty three thousand were injured. Hundreds of thousands of people were made homeless with entire villages flattened, across many districts of the country. Centuries-old buildings

were in the UNESCO world heritage sites were partially or completely destroyed. Nepal's rich cultural heritage had suffered tremendous loss due to the series of massive earthquakes (<http://www.iccrom.org/help-us-collect-information-on-the-nepal-earthquake/>).

According to UNESCO's preliminary assessment on the ground, the monuments and sites within the Kathmandu Valley World Heritage property, as well as several other cultural and natural heritage sites located in the area, have been heavily affected. In particular, Durbar Squares of Patan, Hanuman Dhoka (Kathmandu) and Bhaktapur are almost fully destroyed. Nepal's natural heritage, in particular the World Heritage site of Sagarmatha National Park, including Mount Everest, has also been severely affected by the earthquake

<http://whc.UNESCO.org/en/news/1268>



Nepal Earthquake

*"Disasters and ecosystems are closely linked, although national disaster management organisations are yet to embrace ecosystems as an instrument for disaster risk reduction . (Dr Shirish A Ravan, Head UN-SPIDER Beijing Office, UN-OOSA) ."*



Damage to Cultural World Heritage Sites during Nepal earthquake in 2015

## UPCOMING EVENT

The first call for participation and flyer to the International workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction and Natural World Heritage Sites in the Asia-Pacific region (**24-28<sup>th</sup> August, 2015**) has been launched ([http://wii.gov.in/images//images/documents/unesco\\_ddr\\_workshop\\_flyer\\_aug\\_2015.pdf](http://wii.gov.in/images//images/documents/unesco_ddr_workshop_flyer_aug_2015.pdf)). A first of its kind it aims to bring in eminent experts to discuss and deliberate on the role of Natural world heritage sites towards mitigating disasters. It also aims to train site managers towards incorporating DRR techniques in the overall management of the property.

## UNESCO C2C INDIA: CURRENT ACTIVITIES

**Celebration of World Heritage Day, 18<sup>th</sup> April**

**A**cross the World, World Heritage Day is celebrated on the 18<sup>th</sup> April every year in order to commemorate the beauty, splendour and biological richness of World Heritage Sites, inscribed in the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage list and to commemorate the collective commitment of mankind towards conserving these areas for posterity. With this background, the UNESCO Category 2 Centre on World Natural Heritage Management and Training for Asia and the Pacific Region at Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, India celebrated World Heritage Day on its campus on 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2015 with great enthusiasm. With youth as the focus, the event was enriched with the presence of students from various schools in Dehradun such as Kasiga School, National Institute for the Visually Handicapped and The Asian School.

**Celebration of World Environment Day, 5<sup>th</sup> June**

**W**orld Environment Day (WED) is celebrated each year on June 5. It is one of the principal event through which the United Nations (UN) stimulates world-wide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action. The WED theme for this year, "Seven Billion Dreams. One Planet. Consume with Care," implies living within planetary boundaries is the most promising strategy for ensuring a healthy future. The UNESCO Category 2 Centre on World Natural Heritage Management and Training for Asia and the Pacific Region at Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, India celebrated World Environment day on 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2015 in its campus at Dehradun with great enthusiasm. To raise awareness amongst the youth, nearly 100 students from the Graphic Era University, Dehradun, India participated in the event. The main event was an Extempore Speech

The Event featured an introductory speech by Dr. P.K Mathur, Dean, Faculty of Wildlife Science, WII who focussed upon the diversity of Cultural and Natural Heritage sites in the Asia-Pacific region and the role of the students in their conservation. A presentation featuring the rationale and background of UNESCO World Heritage Programme with stunning visuals of important World Heritage Sites of the Asia-Pacific region was also exhibited. This was followed by the main event of the day, the Quiz Competition on Biodiversity and Natural World Heritage. There was active participation by the students of all the three schools. A guided Nature Walk was organised on the Institute campus for the students to enhance their appreciation of Nature and its bountifulness and to encourage them for its preservation. On this occasion, the first issue of the Natural Heritage E-Bulletin brought out by the Category 2 Centre was also released.

contest for the students who spoke on topics based on current environmental issues. The students also presented their activities for a 'Clean Dehradun' campaign with specific focus on waste management and eco-friendly practices. Mr. J. D. Pati, an Indian Forest Service officer, showcased his fascinating Philately collection and also gave a presentation on collection of postage stamps depicting biodiversity from across the world. A guided nature walk inside the Institute's Campus was organised for the students & faculties of Graphic Era University to provide them an exposure to the natural surroundings of the WII campus. The objective was to enhance the awareness and motivate the young students towards biodiversity around us and its importance in maintaining a healthy ecosystem. On this occasion, the official website of UNESCO C2C was also launched, which aims at providing information about the objectives, functions and activities of UNESCO C2C India.



Dr. P. K. Mathur, Dean, Wildlife Institute of India on the occasion of World Heritage day



World Heritage Day Celebration with National Institute for Visually Handicapped



Dr. V.B. Mathur, Director Wildlife Institute of India on the occasion of World Environment Day



Student activity on the occasion of World Environment Day