From insects to trees: Over 30 Indian cities participate in City Nature Challenge

Participants can use the iNaturalist app (available for Android and Apple phones) to click and upload a photo of natural flora and fauna

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STAFF REPORTER

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Participants as part of the City Nature Challenge. | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

Over 30 Indian cities are set to participate in the City Nature Challenge, an app-based competition that records observations of nature. The city with the most observations recorded over four days (April 28 to May 1) will be the winner.

The Bombay Natural History Society, World Wide Fund for Nature-India, and The Naturalist School have partnered to lead the event in cities like Bengaluru, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Delhi.

Participants can use the iNaturalist app (available for Android and Apple phones) to click and upload a photo of natural flora and fauna. The app uses Artificial Intelligence to suggest the species name. Community members will collaborate to confirm these suggestions. GPS coordinates for the observation are picked up automatically from the image data.

Once an observation is confirmed, it becomes available to scientists and researchers who can use this data to research different plant and animal species or determine the biodiversity in a region.

"Indian cities have more biodiversity than we realise. With the iNaturalist app, just about anyone can record an observation and learn more about what they have seen," says Suchi Govindarajan, Communications Head of The Naturalist School.

"In Bengaluru, we are organising a free nature walk, wherein our volunteers will guide participants about how to explore a natural spot and record what they see on the iNaturalist app," she added.

"City Nature Challenge can become an effective and robust data-gathering tool for researchers to carry out long-term studies over large geographical areas especially focusing on urban areas. But even more than that, it is an exercise for citizens to use Nature in helping to reduce stress, calm anxiety and slow our breath, heart, and pace of life in today's concrete jungles", says Sohail Madan, Assistant Director, Bombay Natural History Society.

The event was first organised in the U.S. in 2016 by the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and San Francisco's California Academy of Sciences and has now become a global citizen-science phenomenon.

For more information, visit *naturalist.school/city-nature-challenge-india-2023*

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