



**INTERNATIONAL DAY
FOR BIODIVERSITY 2026**
Acting locally for global impact



Report on the Celebration of International Day for Biological Diversity, 2026 by the West Bengal Biodiversity Board (WBBB)

Date & Time: 22nd May 2026, 10.00 a.m.
Board, Kolkata

Venue: Auditorium of the Pollution Control

The International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB), celebrated annually on 22th May, is a global occasion dedicated to raising awareness about the critical importance of biodiversity and promoting actions for its conservation and sustainable use.

The theme for this year, '*Acting Locally for Global Impact*' -emphasizes the significance of local initiatives and community-driven efforts in addressing global biodiversity challenges and contributing to the achievement of international conservation goals. The programme was attended by more than 200 participants including BMC members, District Nodal Officers on Biodiversity, Teachers and Students from various universities, colleges and schools, NGOs, officials from various Govt. Departments and other stakeholders.

Dignitaries on Dias: Shri Debal Ray, IFS (Retd.), Ex Principal Secretary, Department of Forest and Head of Forest Force, Government of West Bengal

Prof. Kaustuv Sanyal, Director, Bose Institute

Smt Pratibha Raj, IFS, Addl. PCCF, Forest Department, Government of West Bengal

Smt Sumana Bhattacharyya, IFS Chief Environment Officer, Environment Department, Government of West Bengal

Shri Samanjit Sen Gupta, W.B.C.S. (Exe.), Senior Personnel Manager, West Bengal Pollution Control Board, Government of West Bengal

Dr. Sangita Mitra, State Director, WWF-India, West Bengal State Office

Shri Ram Prasad Badana, IFS, Member Secretary, West Bengal Biodiversity Board

The program was inaugurated by watering a Sundari (*Heritiera fomes*) plant by the dignitaries, followed by a song of Tagore and thereafter welcoming the guests on the dias and honouring them with potted plants.

Shri Ram Prasad Badana, delivered the opening remarks by warmly greeting all the dignitaries on the dias and guests. He mentioned that every organism including insects, animals, birds, and plants - all form integral components of biodiversity. He informed that the Board has taken up different locally significant conservation activities to conserve biodiversity and narrated briefly about the activities undertaken by the Board in last one year.

Shri Samanjit Sen Gupta, delivered a brief lecture on the theme "What Biodiversity Gives Us." He highlighted the invaluable contributions of biodiversity to human well-being, explaining how it provides essential resources and services such as food, clean water, medicines, climate regulation, and protection against diseases.

Prof. Kaustuv Sanyal, delivered an enlightening and thought-provoking lecture on the intricate relationship between biodiversity, technology, and microbiology. He emphasized that biodiversity forms the foundation of ecosystem stability and human well-being, while advances in science and technology provide powerful tools for understanding, monitoring, and conserving biological resources. Prof. Sanyal highlighted the significant role of microbiology in revealing the hidden diversity of microorganisms that inhabit various ecosystems and contribute to essential ecological processes such as nutrient cycling, soil fertility, decomposition, and climate regulation. He explained how modern biotechnological tools, including molecular biology techniques, genomic studies, and bioinformatics, are transforming our understanding of biodiversity and enabling researchers to identify, document, and conserve species more effectively.

Shri Debal Ray, IFS(Retd.), the keynote speaker of the programme, delivered an insightful and engaging lecture on the “Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF): What We Can Do Locally.” He explained the significance of the Global Biodiversity Framework adopted under the Convention on Biological Diversity and highlighted its vision of living in harmony with nature by 2050. During his presentation, Shri Ray elaborated on the four overarching goals of the Framework, namely protecting and restoring biodiversity, ensuring sustainable use of biological resources, promoting fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources, and strengthening financial and institutional mechanisms for effective implementation. He emphasized the importance of the “30×30” targets, which calls for the restoration of 30 percent of degraded ecosystems and the conservation of 30 percent of terrestrial, freshwater, and marine areas by 2030.

Drawing from several real-world examples, he demonstrated how biodiversity conservation at the local level can generate far-reaching global benefits. He highlighted the conservation of traditional crop varieties in West Bengal, emphasizing their importance in ensuring food security and resilience against emerging pests and diseases. Through examples such as coffee rust resistance in Ethiopia and grassy stunt virus resistance in rice derived from wild relatives, he illustrated the immense value of conserving genetic diversity for future agricultural sustainability.

Concluding his lecture, Shri Ray emphasized that meaningful biodiversity conservation begins with local actions and community participation. He encouraged Biodiversity Management Committees, local institutions, researchers, and citizens to actively contribute towards conservation efforts.

Prize Distribution:

This year the Board organized two competitions to promote awareness on biodiversity among all, especially the young minds.

Firstly, **State Level Poster Drawing Competition** on the theme ‘*One tree, many lives*’ (‘একটি গাছ, অনেক প্রাণ’); held in each district of the state (from the March-April 2026) among the students of class VIII-XII, the winner from each district was subsequently judged for the final award at the state level. The following participants were awarded:

Position	Name	Name of School & District
Winner	Shri Koustuv Dutta	Birbhum Zilla School, Birbhum
1 st Runner Up	Shri Anirudra Maity	Sri Ramkrishna Sikshalaya, Howrah
2 nd Runner Up	Smt. Supriti Samanta	Salboni NM Girls' High School (H.S.), Paschim Medinipur

The **State Level Photography Competition** on the theme '*Life in The Habitat*' was for open to all. Out of all the submission, the following three photographs/ participants were declared as winners.

Position	Name	Subject
Winner	Shri Abhijit Banerjee	<i>Nest Environment</i>
1 st Runner Up	Smt. Antara Sarkar	<i>Blending into Being</i>
2 nd Runner Up	Shri Arunava Dey	<i>Egg Eating Spider</i>

An exhibition showcasing the poster drawing made by the school students and photographs was also displayed at the venue. A glimpse of traditional varieties of rice and mango was also exhibited.

Biodiversity Award:

Two persons received the Biodiversity Award for their outstanding contribution and tireless efforts that made a significant impact on the conservation of biodiversity.

- **SHRI MANTU HAIT**, widely known as the “Green Man of Kolkata” and the “Tree Man,” has dedicated his life to protecting and restoring natural ecosystems through innovative grassroots actions. His most remarkable achievement is the transformation of a neglected and garbage-strewn stretch of land between in Kolkata into a thriving urban forest. Through sustained efforts in seed dispersal, plantation, and habitat restoration, he helped create a green oasis supporting thousands of trees and providing refuge for numerous birds, butterflies, insects, and other wildlife.
- **DR. ANUPAM PAUL**, an eminent agricultural scientist, biodiversity conservationist, and champion of indigenous seed preservation. For more than two decades, Dr. Paul has been actively engaged in the collection, conservation, documentation, and promotion of indigenous paddy varieties that form an invaluable component of Bengal’s agricultural biodiversity. Through his dedicated efforts at the Agricultural Training Centre (ATC), Phulia, Nadia, he has helped to conserve over 400 traditional rice varieties, many of which were on the verge of disappearance due to the widespread adoption of monoculture farming and high-input agricultural practices. His work has played a crucial role in safeguarding the rich genetic heritage of Bengal's traditional rice cultivars for future generations.

Book Release:

To commemorate the event, two significant publications were released by the State Biodiversity Board, reflecting the rich biodiversity of the region. The two books were-

- **Sacred Grove of West Bengal (Vol II) [Darjeeling and Kalimpong]**- Documents the rich tradition of sacred grove conservation practiced by various ethnic communities in the hill districts of Darjeeling and Kalimpong. The book highlights how socio-cultural beliefs, traditional knowledge systems, and religious customs have played a significant role in protecting these unique forest patches over generations.
- **Banglar Moth-** is a comprehensive field guide in Bengali dedicated to the remarkable diversity of moths found across West Bengal. Designed for researchers, students, naturalists, and biodiversity enthusiasts, the guide presents detailed information on various moth species, accompanied by photographs and identification features.

Experience Sharing:

A special session on experience sharing was organized during the programme, wherein students, teachers, and Biodiversity Management Committee (BMC) members shared their experiences and achievements under various biodiversity conservation initiatives supported by the West Bengal Biodiversity Board.

- Representatives from **Baramahara Jatindra Vidyapith, Howrah** and **Amarpur Bimala Agricultural Institution, Purba Bardhaman** shared their experiences regarding the establishment and maintenance of Butterfly Conservation Areas within their school campuses. They narrated how the creation of butterfly-friendly habitats through the plantation of nectar and larval host plants has enhanced local biodiversity while providing students with opportunities for nature observation, environmental education, and citizen-science activities. The initiative has fostered greater awareness among students about the ecological importance of pollinators and habitat conservation.
- Teachers and students from **Nawab Bahadur Institution, Murshidabad** and **Joytara Kabiguru Vidyamandir, North 24 Parganas** presented their experiences with the Kitchen Garden project. They highlighted how the initiative has promoted sustainable food production, organic farming practices, and nutritional awareness among students. The kitchen gardens have served as practical activity-based learning spaces where students gain firsthand knowledge about plant diversity, cultivation techniques, and the importance of conserving traditional vegetables and medicinal plants.
- Representatives from **Dasagram S.S. Sikshasadan, Paschim Medinipur** and **Belgachia B.B.A.S. High School, Hooghly** shared their experiences in implementing the Green Fencing project. They explained how the use of native plant species as living fences has not only enhanced the aesthetic value of school premises but has also created habitats for birds, butterflies, and other beneficial organisms.
- Participants from **Sarada Prasad Institution, Kolkata** and **Narayanpur High School (Old Site), Kolkata** showcased the positive outcomes of the Wall Painting initiative. Through vibrant murals depicting local biodiversity, environmental messages, and conservation themes, students have transformed school walls into dynamic educational tools that inspire awareness and encourage positive eco-friendly behaviour among the school community and visitors alike.
- Members of the **Egra-II Biodiversity Management Committee, Purba Medinipur**, and **Ranaghat-I Biodiversity Management Committee, Nadia**, shared their experiences in restoring and conserving traditional water bodies under the Abhay Pukur initiative. They discussed the ecological significance of ponds as habitats for aquatic flora and fauna, sources of groundwater recharge, and centres of community engagement. The initiative has contributed to the conservation of freshwater biodiversity while strengthening local stewardship of natural resources.
- Representatives from **Bolpur-Sriniketan BMC, Birbhum**, and **Kultali BMC, South 24 Parganas**, highlighted their efforts in Crop Conservation, particularly the preservation and promotion of traditional crop varieties. They emphasized the importance of conserving indigenous agricultural biodiversity for ensuring food

security, climate resilience, and the preservation of traditional farming knowledge. Their experiences demonstrated how community participation can play a vital role in safeguarding valuable genetic resources for future generations.

Vote of Thanks

Finally, a formal vote of thanks was proposed by Dr. Anirban Roy, Research Officer at WBBB acknowledging the illuminating talk of the distinguished guests and expressed the gratefulness on behalf of the Board for their valuable time. He extended thanks to the National Biodiversity Authority, Dept. of Environment, Govt. of West Bengal, and all the participants for making the event successful.