

## RAVAGING BEAUTY OF KOELADEO NATIONAL PARK



Sheer announcement of a visit to Koeladeo National Park Bharatpur -a park in the lap of flood plains of Bharatpur popularly known as the 'bird paradise' made us all miss our heart beats. Being the members of the Birdwatcher's club of our school, we were truly looking forward to watch, explore and admire the little wonders of the world. So we, along with our very dear Principal Sir, Mr. Julian Egbert and Ruby ma'am set out on this pleasurable trip.

Wings of imagination soared high to the extreme, envisaging most magnificent, marvellous, colourful birds gliding and nibbling with jovial cries and enamouring voices in the plush green and clean environment in which they bask freely to enjoy the bounty of nature bestowed upon them.

Thus, we stepped into the National Park bolstered with great enthusiasm, expectations and an unquenchable desire to drink the nectar of nature but, very soon to our dismay, we found out the ground reality. Many areas that were earlier flourishing have now dried up. The reserve, locally known as Ghana, was once a mosaic of grasslands, woodlands, woodland swamps and wetlands. These were the habitats for 374 avian species including 140 species of waterfowl, 372 species of plants, 34 species of mammals, 57 species of fish, 14 species of snakes, 5 species of lizards, 3 species of geckos, 7 species of turtles, 8 species of amphibians, 71 species of butterflies and a variety of other lower life forms. But now, wetlands are no longer wet, the marshy lands are parched and the trees seem to have lost their green glory.



Ruthless human race which is continuously striving to overpower and take control of nature has triggered the bomb of devastating global warming which is swallowing up everything. The magnificence of mountains, the serenity of nature-nothing is safe from the ravaging marks of man's encroachment.

True it is that,  
When you defile the pleasant streams  
And the wild bird's abiding place  
You massacre a million dreams  
And cast your spittle on God's face.



Instead of jovial cries, now we can hear helpless shrieks of birds as if they are cursing us and questioning us in utter desperation to know about their lost abode. Where has it gone? Are we guilty of committing such a grave offence for the sake of our prosperity? It is too terrifying. Our modern technology genuinely owes ecology an apology. We have got to redeem ourselves, from today, from now!

The earth we abuse and the living things we will kill, in the end, take their revenge, for; in exploiting their presence we are diminishing our future.

When our guide told us that this park was once the only wintering site in India for the central population of the rare and endangered Siberian Crane till 2002, our heads were down with shame and guilt as they have not been spotted for long due to scanty rainfall and rising temperature.

There is nothing in which the birds differ more from man than the way in which they can build and yet, leave a landscape as it was before.



Still all is not lost. There are lush green patches where we could spot the beautiful blue Kingfisher, the graceful Mongolian Geese and the elegant Siberian Geese. Our eyes eventually got a treat when we came across the magnificent water birds like the splendid Gray Heron, Water Hen, Egrete, Reddy shell duck, Catfish, Turtles etc. which showcased themselves, flaunting their grandeur. Other common birds that we spotted were the wild Bulbul, Doves, and Owls etc. A brief meeting with them left us awestruck. Truly, we could feel ourselves in heaven amidst the twittering, chirping marvels of nature. But it is pathetic that birds which were used to be seen in flocks have now diminished down to just a few.

May God put some sense in us!

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