

A RARE BLITZ FOR TREES

Relevant for: Environment & Disaster Management | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development & EIA

Blitzes are swift, vigorous attacks and usually part of military parley. But there was nothing military about citizens as they looked up at trees across India on December 1 and 2: they were on a 'bioblitz', recording the flowering and fruiting of common trees.

The Winter Tree Quest's results now reveal that India's tree-watchers observed almost 15,000 trees during this short time. As many as 121 individuals and teams from 50 schools and 34 colleges from across 23 states in India participated in the bioblitz (a biological survey where participants try to record all the targeted species within an area) conducted by SeasonWatch (a citizen science programme of Bengaluru's National Centre for Biological Sciences). Participants observed individual trees in their neighbourhoods and campuses, and contributed information including the tree species, its location, proportions of flowers, fruits and leaves. They can then upload this data.

Preliminary results from the Quest reveal that coconut palms were the most-observed trees (1,933 observations from across India), followed by mango, jackfruit, neem and teak. Other trees observed include the gulmohar, purple bauhinia, guava, peepal and tamarind. The observations provided a snapshot of how the trees were doing. For instance, while a high proportion (85%) of the mango trees observed bore fresh leaves (typical of the season, as the trees get ready to bear flowers and fruits in a few months), some also had open flowers as well as unripe fruits.

With 11,567 observations, Kerala took the lead (contributing 78% of all records), followed by Maharashtra (1,020), Karnataka (549), Uttarakhand (528) and West Bengal (509).

"I observed 115 trees near my home and school. It was a great experience participating in the Winter Tree Quest," said K. S. Lyla, a school teacher from Kerala.

Area of 7, 900 sq km was cleared in one year: Greenpeace

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