

Fostering a New Generation of Wetland Stewards through Wetland Learning Centre in Delhi NCR

"Creating a 3-D model of a wetland ecosystem was an eye-opener. I learned how wetlands act like natural sponges, absorbing excess rainwater and recharging groundwater. They are vital for flood control, drought mitigation, and even for water purification. This initiative made me realize the incredible value of wetlands and the urgent need to protect them" said Jasnoor, VIII class student, Delhi Public School (DPS) RK Puram, New Delhi

Standing before her classmates and teachers, Jasnoor carefully adjusted her 3D model of a wetland catchment. With vibrant hues of blue and green representing the wetlands and surrounding vegetation, Jasnoor was ready to showcase the critical functions of wetlands. "Good morning, everyone," she began, her voice filled with excitement". Today, I want to talk about the incredible functions of wetlands, their role in the water cycle, and the cultural services they provide."



Entries on 3D Model Making Competition on Wetland Catchment submitted by the students of DPS RK Puram, New

Delhi's wetlands, once silent custodians of the city's ecological balance, are now facing severe threats from urban expansion. Recognizing the urgency, India Water Partnership (IWP) and Wetlands International South Asia (WISA) led an initiative to engage the youth in wetland conservation and establishing a Wetland Learning Center at DPS RK Puram, New Delhi.

Wetlands as a Biological Supermarket

This initiative is a part of IWP core strategy implemented by WISA to foster engagement of the youth in environment conservation. Started in 2023 under GWP-South Asia three-year program (2023-2025), the initiative underwent a series of interactive programs to foster wetland education. The major highlights were the "**Wetlands as a Biological Supermarket**" presentation on January 18, 2024 and a presentation on "**Conserving Wetlands for Managing Water Risks**" on 25th April, 2024, followed by a creative 3-D Model-Making Competition on 17th May, 2024 at DPS R K Puram, New Delhi.

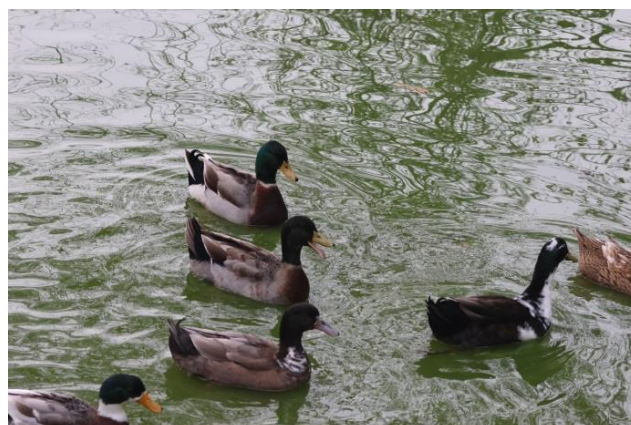
These engaging sessions introduced students of class 8th and teachers from DPS RK Puram, New Delhi to the vital role of wetlands play in mitigating water-related risks, including floods and droughts, and how their conservation contributes to sustainable water management. Interactive discussions, visual aids and the case study were aimed to raise awareness among students about the crucial role wetlands play in preserving vital ecosystems and ensuring water security for the future. By inspiring curiosity and concern, the event empowered young minds to become wetland stewards.



Students showcasing the flashcards, brochures and the comic book they received as learning material

Youth Experiences Wetlands Importance during Field Trip to Hauz Khas Lake, New Delhi

To complement classroom learning, students embarked on a field trip to Hauz Khas Lake, a Delhi-based urban wetland on January 24, 2023. This hands-on experience allowed them to explore the lake's rich history, hydrological systems, water birds and diverse ecosystem first-hand. By witnessing the functions and challenges of urban wetlands, students gained a deeper appreciation on conservation efforts. This transformative field trip bridged the gap between theory and practice, making wetland ecology tangible and engaging for young learners.



Students witnessed water birds: Red-naped Ibis (left) and domestic ducks (right) in Hauz Khaa Lake during field trip

The Wetland Learning Centre developed under this initiative will become a pivotal hub for educational activities, hosting workshops, model-making competitions, and immersive field visits to local wetlands; such as Hauz Khas Lake, New Delhi. These activities not only deepen the students' understanding of wetland ecosystems but also empower them to advocate for conservation efforts within their communities.

With over 773 students and 31 teachers actively participating, the initiative has succeeded in instilling a sense of responsibility towards wetland conservation among the younger generation. Educational materials like flashcards, brochures and case studies on the wetlands of Delhi NCR and their biodiversity further enhance the learning experience, ensuring sustained engagement and knowledge dissemination.

As Delhi's urban sprawl threatens these vital ecosystems, initiative like the one at DPS RK Puram, New Delhi serve as a beacon of hope, nurturing a new wave of wetland stewards dedicated to preserving and protecting these natural habitats for future generations. Through hands-on learning and community engagement, students not only grasp the scientific intricacies of wetlands but also develop a deep-rooted connection to their local environment, paving the way for sustainable conservation practices in the years to come.

The IWP and WISA initiative stands as a testament to the power of education in driving environmental awareness and action, illustrating how youth-driven efforts can catalyse meaningful change in safeguarding our planet's fragile ecosystems. With continued support and commitment, DPS RK Puram, New Delhi and its Wetland Learning Centre are poised to inspire more students and educators to champion the cause of wetland conservation, ensuring a brighter and greener future for all.

For more details, please see the link: <https://tinyurl.com/2jj8sbzc>