



### **From Awareness to Action: Youth-Driven Climate Leadership**

A one-day symposium on the theme “From Awareness to Action: Youth-Driven Climate Leadership” was organized on 25 February 2026 at the College Auditorium Hall, jointly by Government Arts College, Maninagar, Ahmedabad and Government Science College, Maninagar, Ahmedabad. The programme was attended by renowned environmental expert Shri Uday Vora (Retd. IFS), popularly known as the ‘Bird Man of Gujarat’, Dr. Namita Sharma, Principal of Government Arts College, Principal of Government Science College, Dr. Manoj Patel, IQAC Coordinator Dr. Pinal Doshi, Dr. Chirag Shah, and Head of the Department of Geography, Dr. Falguni Shah. More than 100 students and faculty members participated actively in this symposium.

Welcoming the guests, Dr. Namita Sharma emphasized that climate change is one of the most pressing global challenges. She stated that the objective of the symposium was to bridge the gap between awareness and action by empowering youth with the skills, guidance, and collaborative opportunities required for meaningful climate leadership. She also referred to the recently organized conference titled “Conversations on Conservation: Preserving the Globe for Future Communities” (2–3 February 2026) as part of the institution’s continuing commitment to environmental awareness and action.

In the first session, Shri Uday Vora delivered a detailed presentation on “Migratory Birds of Gujarat.” He explained migration as a natural and seasonal process driven by food availability, breeding needs, and climatic conditions. He clarified categories such as resident, migratory, local migratory, resident migratory, and passage migrants. Highlighting the significance of the “Central Asian Flyway”, he explained India’s crucial role as a stopover region for migratory birds, noting that 171 species using this flyway have been recorded in Gujarat.

He presented data showing that Gujarat has one of the largest wetland areas in India, including inland and coastal ecosystems such as mangroves, mudflats, reservoirs, and salt pans. He referred to important Ramsar sites like Nal Sarovar, Khijadiya, Thol, and Wadhvana. He further highlighted major wetlands supporting over 20,000 waterfowl and noted that more than 20 lakh birds are recorded in Gujarat during winter. Species such as Red-breasted Goose, Marbled Duck, Red-Crested Pochard, Asian Dowitcher, Flamingos, Great White Pelican, and Demoiselle Crane were discussed. Concluding, he expressed pride in Gujarat’s exceptional habitat diversity and stressed the need for stronger wetland conservation.

The second session was delivered by Shri Mahesh Singh (Retd. IFS), an expert in forest conservation policy. He emphasized that biodiversity conservation is a shared responsibility of government, institutions, and citizens. He underlined the importance of protecting forests, wildlife, and genetic diversity while ensuring sustainable resource use. Referring to key legislations such as the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, he stated that their effectiveness depends largely on public participation.

He encouraged students to prepare campus biodiversity checklists, participate in tree plantation drives, adopt the 3R principle, reduce plastic use, conserve water and electricity, and engage in eco-clubs and citizen science initiatives. He also discussed major environmental challenges including urbanization, climate change, pollution, invasive species, and illegal wildlife trade. He concluded that consistent small actions can collectively create a significant positive impact.

The session further elaborated on biodiversity conservation as the protection and sustainable management of plant species, wildlife, microorganisms, and ecosystems. It highlighted the importance of public participation, community-based conservation, Village Biodiversity Registers, and Joint Forest Management. The role of educational institutions in promoting environmental education and organizing awareness activities was also emphasized. Various national and international conservation organizations were mentioned, along with academic and career opportunities in environmental science, wildlife studies, forestry, GIS, and related fields.

In the third session, Shri Lokendra Balasaria, an architect and founder of *Treewalks*, presented the urban sustainability perspective. He explained how *Treewalks*, founded in 2013, works to reconnect people with nature through guided tree walks and experiential learning. Participants learn to identify native species, understand ecological roles, and promote biodiversity in urban spaces. He described activities such as composting workshops, waste segregation drives, terrace gardening, seed collection, and chemical-free cultivation.

*Treewalks* also collaborates with schools, colleges, and organizations to conduct sustainability workshops and nature-based team-building activities. He emphasized that environmental responsibility begins with simple lifestyle changes such as mindful consumption, reducing plastic use, and conserving natural resources.

Dr. Janki Shah, Programme Director – Sustainable Lifestyles & Traditions at the Centre for Environment Education, Ahmedabad, addressed climate change through the lens of Indian traditional knowledge. She highlighted her work in climate resilience, sustainable livelihoods, water, agriculture, and biodiversity. She emphasized that many indigenous practices are inherently climate-friendly and resource-efficient. According to her, integrating traditional ecological wisdom with modern sustainability frameworks is essential for long-term environmental resilience.

The programme was anchored by Dr. Jayesh Vyas and Dr. Yamuna Panicker. Dr. Janki Shah presided over the valedictory session. The collective efforts of faculty and students from both colleges contributed significantly to the success of the symposium.