

# **YOUTH CLIMATE & CONSERVATION FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME (YCCFP)**

## **COHORT 5.0**

**Date:** 5th to 8th July 2025

**Location:** Nameri National Park and Tiger Reserve, Assam

**Designed by:** Wildroots India

**Supported by:** IUCN–CEC, National Geographic Education

**Experiential Partner:** Assam Investment Advisory Society (AIAS)

### **Programme Overview**

Held from **5th to 8th July 2025** in the biodiverse landscape of **Nameri National Park and Tiger Reserve**, the fifth cohort of YCCFP brought together **28 student participants** and their teachers from schools across India. Designed by **Wildroots India**, partially funded by **IUCN–CEC**, supported by **National Geographic Education**, and with **Assam Investment Advisory Society (AIAS)** as the **Experiential Partner**, this immersive fellowship combined ecological education with community engagement.

After previously partnering in **Cohort 3.0** in Chengelimari, Garogaon, Sonitpur District, Assam, AIAS once again played a crucial role in facilitating on-ground learning and local collaboration.

The participants represented schools such as **Delhi Public School (Bengaluru)**, **Bal Bharti Public School (Delhi)**, **Indirapuram Public School (Ghaziabad)**, **Maria's Public School (Guwahati)**, and **Scindia Kanya Vidyalaya (Gwalior)**.

The fellowship was mentored by **Dr. Biswajit De**, Founder-President of Wildroots India; **Shri Gautam Gupta**, an IT professional and aquatic systems specialist; and **Smt. Soumali Debnath**, an educator from DPS Bengaluru, all of whom brought diverse expertise and compassionate guidance to the cohort.

A key highlight of the programme was the **participation of six students and two teachers from Bogijuli High School**, one of AIAS's intervention **Forest Fringe School (FFS)**. Their involvement reflected the programme's emphasis on **equity and inclusivity**, ensuring that **youth from ecologically sensitive and remote communities** were integral to the fellowship experience.

These students actively engaged in all programme components — from scientific learning to cultural exchange — and made a lasting impact during the **cultural evening on the final day**, where they shared performances rooted in their local traditions and community stories.

### **Day 1: Orientation, Ecosystem Learning & Cultural Connection**

Day 1 began with **energizing ice-breakers, plenary discussions**, and an overview of key concepts related to **climate consciousness and conservation ethics**. Fellows explored how ecosystems are linked to human life and began building connections across cultures and geographies.

**AIAS** introduced participants to its **Forest Fringe School Project**, showcasing how alternative education models rooted in nature and community engagement are transforming learning in rural Assam.

**Mahila Shakti Kendra (MASK)** led a cultural session highlighting **Assamese traditions, local crafts, cuisine, and climate-positive practices**, giving students a lens into how **gender, culture, and environmental sustainability** interconnect in local communities.

**Key Learnings:**

- Cultural identity as a pathway to **climate responsibility**
- Role of **community institutions** and local knowledge in ecosystem conservation
- Youth as powerful agents of **peer-to-peer awareness and change**

**Day 2: BioBlitz, SDG Workshops & Night Trail**

Day 2 opened with **BioBlitz 1**, a guided birdwatching and biodiversity documentation walk at sunrise. This was followed by interactive sessions on **ecosystem services, SDGs, GIS mapping**, and field-based problem-solving activities.

Fellows also participated in **group reflections** and role-play exercises on sustainable futures. The day concluded with an atmospheric **owl trail** across the campus— a memorable experience that fused curiosity with wonder.

**Key Learnings:**

- Scientific observation builds **awareness and responsibility**
- Mapping tools can empower **community-level climate action**
- Learning in nature fosters deeper **emotional connections to the environment**

**Day 3: Biodiversity Survey, Community Interaction & Cultural Evening**

On the final day, the fellows participated in a biodiversity survey and campus BioBlitz led by Shri Chaitnya Kashyap Bhuyan, followed by a guided walk through a man-made rainforest created by Mr. Bhyuan himself. During this walk, students explored the principles of **restoration ecology**, identified **native plant species**, and understood how designed ecosystems can contribute to long-term conservation.

This was followed by a **hands-on water quality experiment** conducted by **Shri Gautam Gupta** in one of the **local water bodies nestled within the lush green surroundings of Nameri**. The session not only introduced students to **field-based environmental testing techniques**, but also deepened their appreciation for the role of clean water and aquatic systems in sustaining biodiversity.

Later in the day, the fellows travelled to **Bogijuli High School**, where they engaged with local students, visited the school's **Seed Bank and Nursery**, and shared reflections on their learning journeys. A warm, community-prepared lunch served as a celebration of local hospitality and connection.

The evening came alive with a **cultural showcase**, where participants — including students from **Bogijuli High School** — performed songs, dances, and storytelling pieces rooted in their respective cultures. The final gathering under the stars captured the spirit of shared learning, resilience, and unity in diversity.

A special moment of pride and encouragement followed, as the **Range Officer of Nameri, representing the Assam Forest Department**, joined the closing ceremony to **distribute certificates and commendations** to the participants.

His presence reinforced the strong collaboration between **conservation authorities, educational institutions, and community partners** in nurturing young climate leaders.

**A community stall featuring traditional Assamese jewellery and textiles** was also set up by MASK.

Their presence provided a meaningful lens into how **women-led grassroots institutions** are leading the way in **sustainable living and cultural preservation**.

### ***Key Learnings:***

- Conservation is strengthened through community-rooted education
- Youth from different regions share a common vision for climate resilience
- Culture and celebration are powerful mediums for storytelling and advocacy

### **Conclusion**

The 5th Cohort of the Youth Climate and Conservation Fellowship Programme was not just a camp, but a **living classroom** where forests, rivers, stories, and science came together.

The meaningful participation of **Forest Fringe School students from Bogijuli High School**, alongside students from across India, reaffirmed that **climate education must be inclusive, locally grounded, and globally connected**.

The programme concluded with not just greater awareness — but a shared vision for a better, more resilient future shaped by the hands and hearts of youth.

### **Annexure:**



**Student Coordinators, mentors and Forest Fringe School Participants**



**Dr. Biswajit De conducting sessions**



**Team AIAS conducting sessions**



**Student participants from MASK demonstrating their exhibition**



**Participants with Shri Gautam Gupta showcasing the “Terrarium”**



**Bogijuli High School Visit**



**Student Mentors with the Range Officer**