

Sunder Nursery buzzes with activity

NEW DELHI: While Sunder Nursery remains shut during the lockdown, it is still buzzing with activity, thanks to over five lakh bees thriving in the heritage park. While under normal circumstances, World Bee Day on Wednesday would have seen a flurry of activity at the nursery, including a workshop for visitors on how to handle bees and their importance in the ecosystem, experts feel that the lockdown has only helped the insects flourish, all thanks to no human disturbance.

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) collaborated with the Columbia Global Center, Mumbai and the Golden Hive Foundation to create a healthy bee ecosystem inside the nursery premises. Ratish Nanda, CEO of AKTC, said the conservation project started last year, with five workshops conducted till now to educate visitors.

The focus of all three organisations has been on creating 'bee hotels' – safe places where bees can grow in numbers and live. Around 18 artificial hives have been created in the park, which Nanda says are capable of holding up to 60,000 bees each at a time. However, he points out that 90% of all bee species are solitary in nature and 50% make their nests below the ground.

The organisations involved are also trying to clear up misconceptions around bees. "Bees sting only when they or the hive seems to be in danger and die upon stinging humans or other mammals. Instead of being afraid, one just needs to stay still and let them buzz and the insects will not harm you," said Nanda.

Local youth from the Nizamuddin basti have also received training for the project. Nanda says even during the lockdown, volunteers continued to take care of the hives, supplementing sugar syrup whenever required.

Rakesh Gupta from the Golden Hive Foundation says the idea was to create an appropriate environment for diverse bee species, a number of which are found naturally at Sunder Nursery. "There are solitary bees here as well, not just the ones that make honey. Our common aim is to share knowledge of the flora desired by the bees. Flora on which they thrive on has been planted at Sunder nursery and other green places will also be targeted, so that we can ensure continuous sustenance for the flying insects throughout the year," said Gupta.