

Environmental changes, its impact on faunal diversity discussed

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

LUDHIANA, NOVEMBER 19

The two-day national seminar on 'Environmental Changes and its Impact on Faunal Diversity in Indian Agro- Ecosystems', organised jointly by the Punjab Agricultural University and Zoological Survey of India, kicked off here on Monday with more than 200 delegates from 10 different universities across the country participating in the same.

In his inaugural address, Chief Guest Kailash Chandra, Director, Zoological Survey of India, highlighted the importance of each and every species, floral or faunal towards balancing the agro ecosystem.

While elaborating the role of Zoological Survey of India in inventorying faunal species of the country, Chandra disclosed that out of 36 bio-diversity hotspots across the world, four are in India, making it one of the 17 most ecologically diverse countries

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“We need to save biodiversity to prevent the extinction of a large number of animal species peculiarly prevalent in India that form its major genetic resource,” he said. Chandra further divulged that Punjab had a documented number of 2,500 faunal species, which is a good number, considering that a huge area of the state is under agriculture.

Rodent specialist AMK Mohan Rao, Ministry of Agriculture, government of India and consultant FAO stressed on the need of doing surveys to assess biological changes intrinsically and how they

impact biodiversity of animals and human beings.

“The time has come to develop ecological interventions without disturbing the environment,” he said, adding that research in this area would ultimately generate more employment leading to social security and a more aware public.

While delivering his presidential remarks, NS Bains, director research, PAU, discussed the impact of agriculture on faunal diversity. Referring to biodiversity as the basis of our existence, Bains highlighted how the extinction of any species causes loss of an energy and

nutrient pathway forever and its larger impact on all life forms is not yet fully understood. Highlighting PAU's efforts in shifting towards sustainable agriculture, He explained how with the help of integrated pest management for controlling white fly, there was a decrease in the use of broad spectrum pesticides by farmers, as they opted for targeted pesticides requiring fewer sprays. “This led to restoration of a number of faunal species in the fields,” Bains said.

Earlier, Gurinder Kaur Sangha, patron of the seminar and Dean, College of Basic Sciences and Humanities welcomed the dignitaries.

SS Hundal, professor and head, department of zoology, discussed the importance of faunal diversity with respect to agri ecosystems and how research to study impact of climate change on faunal and bio diversity is essential to attain a sustainable ecosystem.