

Save biodiversity to prevent extinction of animal species, says eminent zoologist

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Ludhiana: The two-day national seminar on 'Environmental changes and its impact on faunal diversity in Indian agro-ecosystems' was kicked off here on Monday. The event is being organized jointly by Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) and the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) with more than 200 delegates from 10 different universities participating in it.

In his inaugural address, chief guest and ZSI director Dr Kailash Chandra highlighted the importance of each and every species, floral or faunal, in balancing the agro-ecosystem. While elaborating on the role of ZSI in inventorying faunal species of the country, Chandra revealed that out of 36 biodiversity hot spots across the world, fo-



ZSI director Dr Kailash Chandra speaks at the event on Monday

are in India, making it one of the 17 most ecologically diverse countries in the world. "We need to save the biodiversity to prevent extinction of a large number of animal species peculiarly prevalent in

India that form its major genetic resource," he remarked. Chandra further divulged that Punjab has a documented number of 2,500 faunal species which is a good amount considering that a huge

area of the state is under agriculture.

Rodent specialist Dr AMK Mohan Rao from Union agricultural ministry 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.

During his speech, PAU research director Dr NS Bains 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 nutri-

ent pathway forever and its larger impact on all life forms is not yet fully understood. Throwing light on PAU's efforts in shifting towards sustainable agriculture, Bains 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 the restoration of a number of faunal species in the fields," explained Bains.

In his introductory remarks PAU zoology HOD Dr SS Hundal discussed the importance of faunal diversity with respect to agri-ecosystems and how research to study the impact of climate change on fauna and biodiversity is essential to attain a sustainable ecosystem.