

Doon Watch Nature Series for Dehradun Live Hindustan Times by Sanjay Sondhi

Published on 1 Mar 2013

The “Bee” Boy

Sitting in my garden, I am watching honey bees at work on the flowers of mustard and plum. Whenever I see bees, I am reminded of Arun Prasad Gaur, a remarkable young boy from the village of Bangsil, 70 kilometers from Mussoorie. My very first encounter with Arun was three years ago at Devalsari Reserved Forest, which borders Bangsil. My son, Yash and I, were visiting Bangsil on a nature outing, and Yash, accidentally left his school bag with a bird book and a few other items outside our room at the Forest Rest House. On realising his mistake, Yash returned to get the bag, only to find that it was missing. The caretaker informed us that some young school boys from the village had been hanging about outside our room, and we guessed that they had stolen the bag.

A little while later, Arun, arrived at the forest rest house to meet us. He had heard that some nature lovers were visiting, and wanted to meet with us. During the course of our conversation, Arun found out that Yash’s bag had been stolen. He was livid-how could young school boys from his village behave so badly! Arun took it upon himself to find out who the miscreants were, and the next day, returned our bag with its contents!



Thus began our engagement with Arun. During our four-year association with Arun, we have got to know him, and his remarkable achievements better. Arun’s passion is

bees. From a very young age, Arun has been involved in the study of bees and its important association with nature. He has closely observed bees, and has realised the importance of this insect as a pollinator and a key indicator of the health of the environment. Arun tells me that bees can sense changes such as a cold spell or impending rain, and by observing their behaviour, one can predict weather changes.

For many years now, Arun has been involved in bee-keeping. Raising and keeping bees not only helps the local community generate additional income, but it also helps increase crop productivity by more effective pollination. He has introduced new designs for bee boxes or beehives for more effective beekeeping. Today, Arun has set up an NGO, Prakritik Paryavaran Avam Madhumakhee Shodh Sanstha, which not only helps spread the message of the importance of bees in nature, but also assists the local community to start beekeeping. Arun takes care to raise the Honey Bee *Apis cerana indica*, which is a bee that is native to India, rather than non-native bees.

In addition, Arun acts as the protector of the local forests. Through this NGO, he is involved in environmental education programs with village school children. He is at the forefront of measures to protect the forests and its associated water sources around his village, often taking up battle against ideas and plans of village elders! Kudos to Arun-the Bee Boy!

Feedback on this column is welcome at sanjay.sondhi1@gmail.com

Making a difference: It is inspiring to meet someone as young as Arun, only 19 years old today, who is so passionate about making a difference and protecting nature! Can you do the same? Of course-pick an environmental issue close to your heart, and do something about it!

Photograph caption: The Honey Bee, which Arun raises

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