

The music of everything

Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary

May 5th -8th 2017



Welcome to a weekend of listening to the natural world, and tuning in with your own song.

As long time environmental educators at GBS we've been exploring ways to learn about the natural world, FROM the natural world. Our premise is: to be human and alive requires the company of non-humans. Our experience is: we return to the living world through participation and surrender; when we each find our unique creative connections with the myriad creatures around.



Natural history, begins in the broadest sense with listening. To listen to non humans and interpret their expressiveness and meaning is a skill that can be learned.

Modern life is dominated by the eye. We look, but rarely listen. The loudspeaker culture has deadened most of us to our soundscapes, which were once rich in texture and meaning.

During this weekend we will learn to discern nonhumans through our ears. We will listen far and listen close. We will listen to the tone and pitch of a bird call. We will explore webs of sounds relating to webs of creatures in different places on the land. We will explore the land through its speech and songs.

We will also vocalize in the company of birds and other creatures. Be prepared: you may return home, sounding different.



Mimicry and imitation are powerful movements in learning, both in natural history and in musical education. Both are rooted in acute behavioural observation. In the very attempt to imitate a gesture, a phrase, a whistle, a hoot, a posture, a shout or a song; in trying to come closer and closer to the expressiveness of other creatures, now soft, now impassioned, now alarmed, now busy, we may come upon a faint sense of what is to be like them.



Activities: Walks, long slow sessions of listening to sounds at different times of the day.

Learning some identification on the basis of calls, cries, songs and sounds.

Exploring the edges of our listening abilities.

Exploring sound signatures of different parts of the land.

Vocalization and mimicry sessions: solo and group

Exploring simple musical expression based on sounds learned.

Musical improvisation and tuning in to the jungle orchestra

What kind of culture could arise out of listening to the natural world? What kind of song?

What music?



Facilitators: Birds, frogs and other creatures of the Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary

Abhishek Jain: Naturalist

Abhijith AV: Musician and naturalist

Samira Agnihotri: Ornithologist (researches mimicry in racket tailed drongos and been listening to the forest over a decade)

John Machan: Musical improviser and rethinker of culture

Suprabha Seshan: GBS resident and long term member of the jungle orchestra

Programme dates: Arrival Friday, May 5th

Departure: Tuesday morning, May 9th

Programme fees: contact Suprabha at jungler@gmail.com

For more information: call Suprabha at 9448059414

Note: We request you to leave your cameras and high beam torches at home. This is a weekend for listening, not spotting!

Photographs by Abhishek Jain and Abhijith AV