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# Earth Day: Steps Individuals Can Take In Planet's Best Interest, According To Indian Scientists

by [Karan Kamble](#) - Apr 22, 2021 05:42 PM +05:30 IST

Earth Day is celebrated every 22 April

## Snapshot

- *What is the one new action or habit that one can adopt from today in Earth's best interest?*

*Here's what India's scientists and environmentalists had to say.*

In 1968, humans recorded their first visit to another celestial body, the Moon, as part of the landmark Apollo 8 mission. Besides paving the way for the lunar landing next year – “one small step for man” – the crewed lunar orbital flight yielded a photograph for the ages. Called “Earthrise”, it showed Earth peeking out from beyond the lunar surface.

We have been spoiled by the Hubble spacecraft for over three decades now, with spectacular images of the universe numbering in the countless. But the spontaneously captured Earthrise photograph in 1968 was novel, and looking at our home from afar seemed to shift the human perspective decisively.



"There's the Earth coming up. Wow, that's pretty." - NASA astronaut and Earthrise photographer William Anders (Image: NASA)

Among the areas it impacted was the environment. American nature photographer Galen Rowell famously [declared](#) Earthrise "the most influential environmental photograph ever taken". It has also been regarded variously as a tipping point marking a sudden return of our consciousness back to Earth even as we explored in space.

And thus, as eco-consciousness grew and intensified the world over in the 1960s, the first Earth Day came to be celebrated in the United States two years after Apollo 8, in 1970.

Twenty years later, Earth Day went global. And today, in 2021, we are a year past the golden jubilee of the occasion.

In recent decades, anthropogenic pressures on natural systems have taken a severe toll on our planet. The challenge isn't easing up. With every passing year, the responsibility to act as individuals and collectives grows.

So, what can we do? Is there something individuals can do starting today that would be in the Earth's best interest?

According to Karuna Singh, Regional Director Asia for Earth Day Network, people should look to be climate literate.

“Climate education will prepare youth to gain knowledge about anthropogenic activities that adversely impact Earth and it can help foster a new generation of citizens with the interest and the skills needed for jobs in a growing green economy. Enhanced environmental understanding will help them make better sustainable consumer choices,” she says.

Global climate literacy is also one of the major focus areas of Earth Day.

“It is very important that all the citizens, especially youth, take upon themselves to enhance their deep connection with nature by sharpening their knowledge and skills. This will also produce an active citizenry invested in overcoming the climate emergency,” Singh says.

Singh was [part](#) of a small group trained by former US Vice President and Nobel Laureate Al Gore to make presentations on climate change issues.

Earth Day Network, where Singh is a leader for the Asia region, is an environmental organisation that grew out of the first Earth Day.

Like Singh, Divya Mudappa of Mysuru-based Nature Conservation Foundation highlights the need to build awareness. “Every person should be aware of the environmental destruction being caused by bad and ill-informed policies, particularly in the name of industrial development, and

constantly petition and demand better environmental and ecological governance in the country,” she says.

For over two decades, wildlife ecologist Mudappa has been leading a restoration project that involves transforming the Stanmore tea estate in Tamil Nadu’s Valparai Plateau into a dense rainforest. In her recent [book about Indian science](#) called *They Made What? They Found What?*, author Shweta Taneja writes that as of early 2020, Mudappa and her team had planted 80,000 trees on over 300 hectares of land.

Through her research, Mudappa aims to build a scientific understanding of tropical ecosystems and use that knowledge for [implementation of conservation programmes](#).

Besides building awareness, Mudappa says people can look to “reduce resource use and be aware of the impact our lifestyles have on the environment and make appropriate changes”.

A particularly simple action point she highlights is: “get to know nature in and around your homes and learn to live with them”.

T V Ramachandra of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) advocates for planting of native saplings.

“Let us respect mother earth by planting native saplings, which would help in moderating microclimate, remove pollutants, aid in retaining water (through infiltration and groundwater recharge), prevent soil erosion, and provide an array of goods to sustain the livelihood of people,” he says.

Ramachandra is part of the Energy & Wetlands Research Group at the Centre for Ecological Sciences, IISc. His research areas include wetlands, conservation, restoration and management of ecosystems, and environmental management and education.

He also calls for sense and sensibility to keep the planet healthy.

“Sensible action of conserving ecosystems by every human worldwide would make the earth a healthy planet, ensuring clean and adequate air, water, and food with a secured environment for our children,” he says.

As environmental challenges show no sign of relenting, individuals can take steps in their capacity to effect change.

Earth Day Network’s Singh says this is necessary.

“I firmly believe that to ensure speed in mitigating climate change, individual actions must combine together to make for a holistic approach to mitigate climate change and keep our common home, Earth, habitable for us.”