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Udupi, March 13, 2016

'Preserving flora and fauna of Western Ghats essential'

- Special Correspondent

C.R. Nagendran, retired professor of botany, Mysore University, said on Saturday that preserving the unique flora and fauna of Western Ghats, one of the biodiversity hotspots in the world, was the responsibility of all the citizens.

He was speaking after releasing the book 'Pteridophytes of Karnataka State, India' authored by P.K. Rajagopal, retired professor of botany, MGM College and K. Gopalakrishna Bhat, retired professor of botany, Poornaprajna College, at a function organised by Vanashree – Association of Botany Teachers of Mangalore University and MGM College here.

The book is based on a comprehensive and intensive survey carried out by the authors since 1993 and contains the keys for identification and description of 183 species of Pteridophytes belonging to 71 genera and 30 families.

Dr. Nagendran said that construction of resorts, hotels and roads in the Western Ghats would disturb the balance of nature and lead to a conflict between man and nature. Such constructions should be avoided.

He said that a lifetime was not enough to learn plant taxonomy. "People who identify plants are now an endangered species. There are few taxonomists available now. This is causing problem for identification of plant species," he said.

The younger generation of botanists should pick this thread of taxonomy and take it to a higher level. They should make taxonomy a strong field in botany, Dr. Nagendran said.

Prof. Rajagopal said that the total number of species on the globe is about eight million. Only 20 per cent of species had been identified. The rest 80 per cent were yet to be identified. The number of plant species was less than the number of animal species.
