



Beach exploration

## The beach as a **living museum**

Through 24 activities, *Seashells* seeks to draw Chennai residents out of their indifference to lifeforms on the coast

SB SUBASREE

“The most meaningful learnings come from understanding the real world, the living world and one’s relationships within it”, begins *Seashells*, a digital book on beaches and oceans.

From there, it proceeds to build “beachheads” that attack the ignorance – in fact, indifference might be more like it – that engulfs any understanding about marine ecosystems.

Authored by Yuvan Aves, Nikkitha Terasa and Aswathi Asokan, the book released on June 8 to mark World Ocean’s Day is not for the armchair naturalist.

It has 24 interactive activities, one that can be tried out on the Chennai coast – as it provided material for the book – and comparable coastlines.

“Making an explorer’s map”, “beach shapes hunt”, “nature journaling on the beach”, and “ocean costume party” are among these activities.

The three young authors are all members of Madras Naturalist’s Society (MNS), with which Palluyir Trust has collaborated for this book project.

Nikkitha and Aswathi are final-year zoology students of Stella Maris college, and Yuvan is a naturalist and founder of Palluyir Trust for Nature Education and Research.

“Yuvan wanted to transform this rich ecosystem of beaches and

sea-shores into a learning space filled with exploratory learning. That is when we wanted to create *Seashells*,” Nikkitha explains. Children’s developmental needs and academic requirements guided the course and shape the book would take.

Though the book has been written with primary and elementary children in mind, it provides insights into marine life that would be appealing to anyone outside those age-brackets.

Under every activity, the book presents an “educator’s note” that equips instructors with added pieces of information about the

topic.

Aswathi says: “All the activities we have undertaken so far have time and again shown how life-changing it is for people to try and make connections with nature and make it an integral part of their lifestyle. *Seashells* is a small step towards this endeavour”.

Through their illustrations, Balakrishnan Ram and Bianca have made the book come alive for children.

Says Bianca: “I enjoyed illustrating the book, especially making illustrations of the characters and drawing the map to make it more relatable for the Chennai folks.”

### The salient features

\*The more creatively-inclined readers will be intrigued by “coast journaling”, “coast poetry” and “ocean costume party”

\* “Fish market classroom” and “speak to a marine biologist” will come in handy in improving one’s interviewing and communicating skills.

\*To enhance one’s observational, and sensory skills, “reading the sand’ and “feel and guess” would be beneficial.

\*There are mind maps and step-to-step instructions for certain activities that make it easier to understand.

\*The illustrations represent the people and places of Chennai’s local landscapes from where the authors themselves hail from.

