**Symposium on 'Role of Media in wildlife reportage’**

11th September, 2018:

A Symposium on "Role of Media in wildlife reportage" was organised at St. Xavier's college on 11th September on 10 am. A group of 10-12 students from SIES FYBMM attended the symposium. The symposium covered the life of leopards in the Sanjay Gandhi National Park and Aarey Milk Colony and how they are portrayed in news reports. The conversation started and eased into thelifestyle of a leopard and how with urbanization this beautiful creature had evolved itself into an urban leopard.

The panel had Virat Singh - Special Correspondent for DNA Mumbai, Ranjeet Jadhav - Special Correspondent for Mid-day, Vinayak Parab - Executive Editor of Lokprabha, The Indian Express and Sejal Mehta - Editor of the magazine Nature InFocus and a feature writer for Scroll. Virat Singh said “ It is very important to not have biases while reporting.” He maintained the belief that media plays a very important role in wildlife reporting. He spoke of his own experience that news articles of leopard spottings are sensationalised with use of titles like “Man-eater wreaks havoc” even when no one was injured. He stated that we fail to look at the bigger picture there. Ranjeet Jadhav spoke of how his wariness about leopards changed when he covered some stories about leopard sightings in Aarey Milk Colony. He firsthand saw how they don't try to interact with humans on their own.The students were also familiarised with the lifestyle of the wildlife rescue team of SGNP.

Vinayak Parab classified the timeline of media in three periods namely - Pre-Independence period, Post Independence and Pre Globalization period and Post Globalization period. He asserted that media became an industry in post globalization period. He also stated the importance of regional media as it changes the misconceptions of masses. Sejal Mehta stressed on the importance of feature articles as they gradually change the opinion of the readers. She said, “You want the reader to leave with an aftertaste. That is the power of features.” She talked about her own experience of writing a feature article for Scroll about the Portuguese Man of war, an aquatic animal whose sightings at the beaches of Mumbai led to hysteria among the public with harsh news articles feeding them. She wrote about how the aquatic animal is harmless unprovoked and the other wonderful biological characteristics of said creature.

The students interacted with the panelists and learnt more about how they could not fall prey to such common tropes and help reduce such misconceptions. The symposium proved to be a great learning experience for the young media aspirants.

Reported by,

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