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Pasadena Student Among 2021 International Young Eco-Hero Award Winners

Local Student Receives Top Honor for Contributions to Solving Environmental Problems

San Francisco – Ashwin Sivakumar, a 16 year-old from Pasadena, California, is one of 25 young environmental activists from across the globe honored by Action For Nature (AFN) as a 2021 International Young Eco-Hero, an award that recognizes eco-conscious youth ages 8 to 16 who are taking crucial steps to solve tough environmental problems.

Winners of the International Young Eco-Hero Award are selected by a panel of independent judges, including experts in environmental science, biology, and education. Since 2003, Action For Nature has recognized more than 300 Eco-Heroes from over 30 countries and 25 U.S. states.

Ashwin received an Honorable Mention in the 15-16 year-old category for his project, NativeBiota.

Ashwin Sivakumar is a young scientist who is working hard to protect birds and their natural habitats through conservation and encouraging native-plant landscaping. When Ashwin first moved to Southern California from Oregon, he noticed that his surroundings lacked butterflies, insects, and birds. Ashwin quickly realized that large areas of non-native plantings caused a sterile environment, and he set out to educate the public about the advantages of native plants. He researched and produced a brochure, sponsored by the Pasadena Audubon Society, that illustrated which non-native plants could be replaced with natives, and he distributed the pamphlet through government offices, nonprofits, and nurseries.

Ashwin also served as co-chair of the Advocacy Committee at Pasadena Audubon, working to propose bird-friendly street trees for the city, and writing guidelines on how to prevent window-collision deaths of migrating birds which account for an estimated one billion bird deaths per year. In 2018, Ashwin founded the NativeBiota project which promotes the conservation of native species, especially birds, and their habitats through scientific research, stakeholder education, and community empowerment.

“Kids like Ashwin have shown that the next generation of leaders is here, and they are refusing to wait to solve the world’s most pressing environmental challenges,” said Beryl Kay, president of Action For Nature, an international non-profit organization that encourages young people to nurture a love and respect for the Earth and to take personal action to improve the environment. “The projects that these young people created will not only have real, positive impacts on their communities, they will also help solve global climate challenges and inspire others – no matter what age – to consider what they can do to help.”

“The Earth I love is in trouble and in imminent danger of collapse due to severe habitat loss, climate change, pollution, and a host of other human-induced impacts,” said Ashwin Sivakumar. “I believe that conservation can only be effective if it is science-based and community-driven, and I envision a world that views native plant and animal species as valuable and crucial components of our communities.”

To read more about Ashwin’s work, visit nativebiota.org.

To learn more about this year’s International Young Eco-Hero Award winners, visit actionfornature.org/eco-hero-awards/2021-awards.

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Action For Nature (AFN) is an international non-profit organization based in San Francisco, California, that encourages young people to nurture a love and respect for Earth’s natural resources and to take personal action to better their environments.