

## Providing landscaping and wildlife habitat creation services and working on other core environmental areas, ecological consultants Manasi Karandikar and Ketaki Ghate are doing their bit to save the earth, writes Pranav Dixit

**W**e all know of global warming. That deforestation is becoming rampant. Topsoil degradation is rendering land practically useless to grow anything... water resource management... fossil fuel conservation... non-conventional forms of energy...

Today, we get bombarded by these terms nearly every day. But if you're the kind of person who actually wants to help others find solutions on a practical and personal level, a career as an ecological consultant is what you are looking for.

Basically, ecological consultancy is all about providing people with various services like ecological landscaping (wildlife habitat creation), eco-development (creating ecologically appropriate land, waste and water management), ecological management (assessment of forests, streams and wastelands), as well as eco-tourism planning, management and development.

### EXPERTSPEAK

"Working for the environment at your personal level was never thought about in India till recently," says Manasi Karandikar and Ketaki Ghate, who have jointly set up what is perhaps India's first ecological consultancy firm, Oikos. The duo recently bagged MCCIA's (Maharatta

Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture) Ramabai Joshi Award for Innovative Services.

"It is only now that people have started realising that planning their farmhouses or small-scale industries right from the beginning in an eco-friendly manner will not only save the environment but will also have economic benefits for them in the long run," says Ghate.

Their target client group comprises private landowners, farmhouse plots, private developers and builders.

be the unique 'butterfly corners' that they create. By planting the right plant species, they make sure that butterflies are attracted to the area. As a result, not only is the place beautified, the butterflies also have some kind of shelter as their natural habitat is recreated.

All this might be ok in the rural areas, but what about those who live in the heart of the city? Says Karandikar, "Although there are some restrictions when it comes to a city home due to major space constraints, it is

conservation and restoration techniques." However, most of the skills have to be acquired on the job. You also need to be able to look at a project from a client's perspective and should be able to analyse market trends. Also, as Karandikar says, you have to have a holistic approach towards all environmental issues.

To be an ecological consultant, you should preferably be a science graduate. You also need to do a one-year post-graduate diploma in Natural Resource Management and Sustainable Development. It must be kept in mind that degrees such as Masters in Environmental Sciences, though useful for this job, are mostly concerned with providing solutions to certain, specific environmental matters like global warming or pollution on a larger scale and not with providing services on an individual level.

Depending on the number of services you provide and the quality of work, a fresher can expect to earn around Rs 6,000 to Rs 8,000 per month.

With conservation and restoration already a huge business in the West, there is certainly a vast scope of opportunities in this field in India.

### INSTITUTE

■ The Ecological Society, Senapati Bapat Road, Pune

# Go green

Says Karandikar, "We start right from the construction material used for buildings. For example, we make sure that fly-ash bricks are used instead of the regular ones. We also take the energy and waste accounts of the buildings into consideration."

The firm also provides landscaping and wildlife habitat creation services. "However, we develop it primarily from the ecological point of view. Beautification is secondary," says Ghate. An example of this would

possible to do certain things." She gives an example of their office where nearly everything is made from recyclable and biodegradable wood waste. No metal or plastic has been used to furnish the entire place!

So what are the skills needed to be an ecological consultant? "Well, a genuine interest and a love for nature and wildlife are the basic prerequisites," says Ghate. "But you also need to have an indepth knowledge about botany, zoology, the natural world and

