

In-house Training Workshop for Wildlife Education at Zoo

Zoo Outreach Organisation organized its first in-house "Training workshop for Wildlife Education" in its office venue on 7, 21 & 28 July 2007 for selected school teachers from Coimbatore City. This series of workshops was sponsored by Wildlife Conservation Society, Bronx, NY. In this first batch, 22 teachers from three schools namely PSGR Krishnammal Higher Secondary School for Girls, PSGR Krishnammal Nursery and Primary School and Chandra Matriculation Higher Secondary School participated in the workshop. The participants selection was purely based on their interest in wildlife, conservation, environment and related issues and also on their agreement to try materials and strategies covered in the workshop in their own teaching, linking curriculum texts.

The objectives of the training were:

- 1) To provide educators with effective, easy-to-use teaching tools featuring wildlife which they can apply to any topic in their class rooms,
- 2) To provide an effective source of activities and teaching strategies to reach children and evaluation tools to assess their efficacy and
- 3) To provide information about various other local/global conservation initiatives.

For the three-day programme the Tiger was taken as a theme to introduce teaching methods and *Teacher for Tigers* manual was used throughout the programme. Apart from the tiger manual WCS's *Habitat Ecology Learning Programme* (HELP) manual and ZOO's educational materials were used to supplement and to teach some basics of ecology, games, and planning education programmes.



A participant explaining how tiger is linked with human culture



A scene from Citizen's debate



A team from the participants presenting their action plan of education programme



A scene from Role-play

To create involvement and interest among people, active learning methods were introduced in place of rote learning, the latter of which (unfortunately) is widely followed. On the first day the participants introduced themselves to one another by an activity called "sound off". They were introduced to various assessment tools such as concept map, attitude assessment, and pictorial and content survey questions. The advantages of using assessment tools before and after a programme and their flexibility to use with a wider audience such as literate and non-literate groups were explained. Mini dramas on parental care, poaching, hunting and courtship of tiger were performed in groups. Afterwards, to help the teachers conduct drama performances with their students, a drama kit along with guidelines was given to them along with an explanation of the ways to utilize it. The activity on Tiger range maps triggered the interest of the teachers and many questions related to distribution and habitat were clarified. Through this activity they also clearly understood the critical status of tigers in the wild comparing its past history. Tigers live in a variety of habitats and they are adapted for survival. All animals adapt themselves to their habitat and this was explained through an activity named 'Finger challenge'. Related activities from HELP manual like 'adaptation match' were also explained. In another session they learned to compare the small domestic cats with the majestic tiger and understood tiger behavior and biology. The history of tiger was traced in the 'Tiger time-line' activity. At the end of the first day each participant received an education manual CD produced by ZOO/SANIZE.

On the second day, portions from TFT Units 2 & 3 were covered. Activities such as feeding ecology, tigers in our culture, global perspectives – role play, and Project Tiger mapping were introduced. In between programmes some outdoor games such as hawk and the pigeon, spots and stripes and find the change games were played. A discussion on how Project Tiger reserves in India operated with an intention to highlight the conservation efforts taken by the Government and the people to protect Tigers in India. An activity to find the distribution of tiger reserves in India on a map was done. After the map activity, in order to emphasize the need for sustainable utility of natural resources 'Fishing game' was played. Related games like resource round-up were introduced. The session on counting tigers (census) and studying the home ranges of tigers were made into a demonstration. The participants learned about the census techniques that are used by the field biologists. The pugmark and camera trapping methods were demonstrated.

For any conservation practice, support from the local people is of the utmost importance. To explain this concept, the Nagarahole Citizen's debate was organized. This activity helped

explain how human pressure can influence and reduce the quality of habitats and produce practical difficulties while implementing a project.

The third day was mainly devoted to orienting the teachers to initiate conservation education programmes with their children and also in the nature clubs in which they are involved. Portions from Unit 4 of TFT include 'International Tiger Conservation Conference'. It helped them to understand how the conservation community comes to a consensus and adapts recommendations of experts to help save a species. It is important that the teachers take all opportunities to teach the conservation concept in their class rooms. To help them identify how the TFT is linked with their school curriculum, a detailed presentation was given showing examples from the text books of different grades and how the TFT tools can be applied to teach the subject. This presentation was based on the work done with Tamil Nadu Matriculation Board Syllabus science books from III-VIII standard.



Linking "Teachers for Tigers" with the school curriculum

The Wildlife Conservation Society's "Teens for Planet Earth" was introduced to the teachers. Most of the teachers showed interest in this project and committed to be an adult adviser.

The teachers got an opportunity to present their eco activities from their respective schools. ZOO resource persons demonstrated and explained the ways to utilize ZOO education packets. Other materials like colouring books were introduced with an explanation of how teachers could make effective lessons by using them. All the participants were given a variety of materials, such as "Monkey Manners" packet, South Asian Primates Colouring book and World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy.

A detailed session was devoted to planning an education programme utilising resources from the Zoo Ed Book. Planning an education programme is a completely different aspect from learning about education tools. Executing a programme needs extensive planning and support from the organizers and coordinators. At the end of the session the teachers drafted nine different programmes in groups based on which an Action Plan for education programmes for each school was drafted and circulated. A point person from each school

was also identified to coordinate the education programmes in their schools. The workshop ended with the post workshop concept map. They also made a pledge individually to practice what they learned in these three days in the next 3-6 months. The programme came to an end with teachers expressing great satisfaction of spending three days usefully in learning different teaching techniques. All the teachers received a certificate of participation from the organizers.

The resource persons were Dr. B.A. Daniel and R.Marimuthu of Zoo Outreach Organisation and Ms. Mamtha from De Paul International School, Mysore.

See some other photographs of the programme in the following pages.



Tiger Range Maps



Mini drama rehearsal



Mini drama on Poaching



Tiger Timeline



Little Cats to Big Cats-Jumping activity



Tiger History Exhibition



Tiger Census Method: Pug-mark demonstration



Overview on "Teens for Planet Earth"



Supply of SANIZE Education CD



Participants' presentation



Tiger Stretch: Energizer Activity



Finger Challenge