

## Education Reports

### Living Classroom at Sundarvan

This winter season, green birthday celebrations took place at the park for four children of 8-12 years old and their friends who engaged in outdoors adventure activity, learning about ducks and geese, sensational snakes – the awareness programme, bats echolocation game, face painting, eco-friendly greeting cards and getting tree-bark prints.

Two Bird-watching Trips to the wetland, Pariej, to encourage interested individuals to form local birding groups, documentation on online portals and generate an interest in Ornithology among people. The morning began with an introductory session and mock-trails of bird-watching at Sundarvan which also shed light on urban wildlife. Winter is a perfect season to spot migratory birds and wetlands are a perfect place to silently and peacefully observe many



**Birthday fun with feeding geese at Sundarvan**

species of birds. A round of bird-facts during the bus ride filled the participants with energy to observe the birds, learn about them, their importance and appreciating the beautiful hobby of birding.

Competitively making lists of birds which filled with names from Saras cranes with juveniles, Painted storks group-hunting for fish, Egrets, snowy-white Eurasian Spoonbills, gorgeous Purple moorhens, Black-winged stilts, Green bee-eaters, White cheeked bulbuls all the way to tiny Purple Sunbird. The participants were thrilled by their experience, greatly amused by their observations like the difference in birds at Sundarvan and Pariej and agreed to monitor birds close to their home as well.

People were treated to a "Christmas-at-the-zoo" event with 'Photo-with-Santa-Claus' in the park followed by an evening programme of 'Movie-and-Snacks'. Underwater adventure filled movie, "Finding Nemo" was featured on a projector screen in an open-air amphitheatre with hot snacks during the



**Excitedly spotting Greylag geese at Pariej**

movie. Children and adults alike enjoyed the movie and a brief discussion on the various sea-creatures starring as characters in the animated movie. Sundarvan introduced their first ever Winter Night Camp in November 2015 and conducted three consecutive batches up until January 2016, for 7 to 15 year olds within Sundarvan premises. The idea is to plant the seed of nature appreciation in the minds of young members of the society which will bloom into a life-long passion. The young naturalists were filled with excitement for the night zoo trail, spider watch, stories around the campfire, birdwatching and fun with clay dough that were arranged around delicious meals taken in the outdoors. Amazing insight was shared in form of questions and stories during the night and brave little kids rewarded the Sundarvan team with their "Oohs" and "Aahs" as they craned their necks to get a better view at the web of a tent spider and admired the wolf spider and the two-tailed spider, which were few among the many species they learned about.



**Oohs and Aahs fill the spider watch and night trail at Sundarvan**

Education continued into the New Year with green resolutions and constant fun facts on the Sundarvan, Ahmedabad facebook page as well as planning of more awareness events.

### **Nature Appreciation trip to Blackbuck National Park at Velavadar**

Established in 1976, The Blackbuck National Park at Velavadar is in the Bhal region of Saurashtra, Gujarat. Sharing its southern boundary with the coast of Gulf of Khambhat, it was primarily grassland of the Maharaja of the princely state of Bhavnagar for hunting blackbucks with his famous hunting cheetahs. Successful conservation programs for the blackbuck, wolf and lesser florican are ongoing at this park.

Roused early in the morning, a group of children and adult filled in to the bus, all pepped up for a bus safari to the land of Blackbucks. The group from Sundarvan were fortunate to see a good number of Blackbucks in herds which included beautiful adult males, young sub-adults, agile females and two albino females; some even gently sprinting in their habitat. Apart from Blackbucks, participants saw herds of Blue bull females, and males donning their magnificent bluish grey coats, staring back at the



**Participants are delighted to know that Blackbuck National Park - Velavadar is one of the largest roost sites for harriers in the world**

spotting the colourful Common Teal, brilliantly chestnut coloured Brahminy Ducks, few Purple Moorhens glistening in the sun, a flock of Black-naped Ibises, diving beauties - the Pied Kingfisher and Little Grebe, the powerful Marsh Harriers, and waders - Wood Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Black-winged stilts and Ruffs and other species of birds.

The participants gave positive feedback and many questions were asked about the kind of books to read and places to visit to learn more about wildlife and its conservation. A peaceful bus ride back to Sundarvan was spent as a beautiful full moon rose slowly to the sky, shining orange at first and silver when it was higher. **Submitted by: S. Sivakumar, Park Manager, Jignasa Patel, Education Officer, Sundarvan & Meena Nareshwar, Senior Programme Co-ordinator, CEE. Email: [sundarvan@ceeindia.org](mailto:sundarvan@ceeindia.org)**



**Young birders exchange their lists and descriptions at the wetland**

onlookers in the sun. Every now and again, younger participants would spot a Drongo or two carried upon the back of Blue bulls. Being an excellent habitat to birds, everyone watched in awe as the Common Krestrel hovered in mid-air, the Pallid Harriers took flight, and the crested larks and white-eyed Buzzard so well-camouflaged in the surrounding.

Two bird watching trips were already organised to the wetland Pariej in 2015 to encourage interested participants to form local bird watching groups. The safari was followed by a stop at a nearby wetland on the way back. A few hours were spent here, as the group bonded over binoculars and cameras. Everyone took notes and took a great interest in

**Awareness campaign on Western hoolock gibbon (*Hoolock hoolock*) conservation in Cachar and Karimganj Districts, Assam**  
Wildlife Conservation Laboratory, Department of Ecology and Environmental Science, Assam University, Silchar received a UGC sponsored major project entitled, "Status survey of Hoolock Gibbon with special reference to Habitat analysis, Food analysis and anthropogenic pressure in the Inner-line Reserve Forest and its adjoining areas of Cachar dist., Assam". As an important component of the project a total of ten training and awareness programmes were organized for villagers in fringe areas to identify the habitat of Hoolock gibbon, their food plants, plantation of food plants etc. so as to increase the awareness for conservation of wildlife, highlighting Western Hoolock Gibbon as a flagship species. The awareness/training camps were organized in Cachar and Karimganj Districts near the fringe areas



**Mohanlal M E School, Nayabil**

of Hoolock Gibbon habitat to make villagers aware of the need of wildlife conservation. Pre and post awareness questionnaire survey were carried out to do the concept mapping among the villagers about wildlife conservation. Close ended questionnaire was formed to get quantitative assessments of the



**Dargakona Public HS School**

perceptions of wildlife conservation among the fringe villagers and forest dwellers. It was helpful for assessing the success of the awareness campaign. During the month of December, 2015 the awareness campaigns were conducted in different schools near the fringe areas of Inner-Line Reserve Forest of Cachar district, and Patharia RF, Longai RF and Cheragi RF of Karimganj district, Assam, where



**Brajakishore High School**

Western Hoolock gibbons are fighting for their last survival in few isolated groups. These campaigns were held in the presence of students as well as local inhabitants.

The awareness campaigns were organized in 7 schools from Cachar district and 3 from Karimganj district which are located near the reserve forest areas. And they are: *Cachar*: Mohanlal ME school, Nayabil; Brajakishore High school, Duwarbond; Nowagaon ME school, Pratappur; Bandhan guwala LP school, Ioharbond; Rosekandi High School; Dargakona Public HS school, Dargakona; Barjalenga MV school, Barjalenga; *Karimganj*: Satkoragol LP school, Ujangaon; Dubri LP school, Patharkandi and Khasiapunji tribal LP school, Khasiapunji.



**Dubri L P School, Patherkandi, Karimganj Dist**

During the campaigns the behaviour and ecology of Hoolock gibbon was taught as well as the need of conservation and the various survival stress of this elusive animal that occur in the reserve forest areas. The awareness/training programme was carried out under the leadership of Prof. Parthankar Choudhury and the research scholars Mofidul Islam (Project fellow under the UGC-MRP), along with Dipankar Debnath carried out the training and awareness campaigns.

**Submitted by: Prof. Parthankar Choudhury.**

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### **World Wetlands Day celebration by Forest Department and Indian Biodiversity Conservation Society at Jhansi, UP**

Wetlands are "biological supermarkets", which provide immense food that attracts many animal species for completion of their life-cycle. Wetlands play key role in life on Earth. The decaying dead plants and animals in the wetlands are converted by bacteria into organic matter (detritus) that are fed by many small aquatic insects, shellfishes and small fishes that are food for larger predatory fishes, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals. Tamil Nadu has highest number of lakes (4369) followed by Uttar Pradesh (3684) and West Bengal (1327).

World wetlands day was celebrated on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2016 by Forest Department of Jhansi and Lalitpur together with Indian Biodiversity Conservation Society (IBCS), Jhansi. The students of class 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of Modern Brilliant Public School, Babina were taken for nature trail at Sukhwa Dhukwa Dam. The students observed the flora and fauna around the water body and later participated in the sketching competition. They drew what they saw while walking along the dam. The students learnt and realized the importance of wetlands in our daily life. They expressed their views and cleared their queries while



**Students holding Sarus crane poster which is state bird of UP**

such as Govind Sagar, Rajghat, Pahuj, Sukhwa Dukhwa, Paricha, Shehzad, Matatila along with Mansarovar lake, Laxmi Talab and Baruasagar Jheel.



**Students going through the flyers on wetlands**

interacting with Shri Devendra Kumar, CCF (Jhansi, Lalitpur, Jalaun), Uttar Pradesh. The winners were Anuradha Verma, Harshit Namdev and Mandavi Yadav. Hargovind and Rajesh of Government School were also appreciated for their efforts. The students were provided with flyers on Wetlands in Hindi i.e the local language. They were also given the posters on Sarus Crane, the State Bird of Uttar Pradesh that is associated and dependent on wetlands for their survival.

Wetlands in the Bundelkhand Region are under threat due to natural calamities that includes the draught. The Bundelkhand region is a backward region where people are poverty driven. The younger generation needs to be aware about the important sources of livelihood so that they live sustainably with the nature. The aim of celebrating World Wetlands Day was to explore wetlands in the vicinity of Jhansi and Lalitpur districts. Another important perspective was to aware local community and students about the wetlands, their threats, biodiversity and conservational requirements.

Besides this the team of volunteers (Abhishek Namdev, Brijendra Tiwari, Shailesh Yadav, Bipin, Saurabh, Rajesh, Shivam, Sanskar, Dayashagar) surveyed the wetlands of Jhansi and Lalitpur to know the biodiversity as well threats faced by these productive ecosystems. The sites included dams

Various Government schools participated in the World Wetlands Day. The Principal and teachers of these schools explained the students that wetlands are key drivers of local economies. They are increasingly facing several anthropogenic pressures, due to rapidly expanding human population. Unfortunately, many such areas have been converted for agriculture, industry or settlements. **Submitted by: Dr. Sonika Kushwaha, President, Indian Biodiversity Conservation Society, Jhansi, UP. Email: [ibcsforall@gmail.com](mailto:ibcsforall@gmail.com).**

**ZOO's Animal Welfare Fortnightly 2016 programme at Coimbatore, TN**

Every year, Animal Welfare Board of India celebrates Animal Welfare Fortnight from 14-30 January. The importance of celebrating fortnight is to highlight the animal welfare issues to the common people and to motivate them to compassionate with animals. It is being celebrated in various ways throughout India.

Zoo Outreach Organisation convened an Animal Welfare Fortnightly programme on 23 January at



**The women wearing elephant masks**



**Tying elephant *rakhis* with each other**

Narasipuram Adi Dravidar village, Thondamuthur of Coimbatore district. About 40, mostly women participated in the programme. They were highlighted about basic animal welfare issues both domestic and wild such as the five freedoms of animal welfare (freedom from thirst and hunger, discomfort, pain, injury, disease, express most normal behaviour, fear and distress), animal welfare laws, offer grain and water to the birds, plant bird friendly trees, not use plastic bag and throw edible leftovers tied with the bag because animal eat the plastic will die, rescue the sickness animals and take them to veterinary hospital, not to use oxytocin injection to draw milk from cows etc.,

Later, they were told about the significance of Western Ghats, the river system, its biodiversity and how it is directly helps their survival. Followed by human elephant coexistence programme was held. Since this village is prone to human elephant conflict, this is apt to have a programme with these people. They were told about elephant facts, its behaviour, the difference between Asian and African elephants and more tips how to save their lives when confronting with elephants. IEF sponsored education kit was used. They were zealous in tying the



**Happy to put on elephant headband**

elephant *rakhis* each other, putting on headband, wearing elephant mask and holding the placard and committing that coexist with elephants. Thanks are to Mr. N. Thiagarajan, Project Officer, The Tulsi Trust and Ms. V. Girija Sivakami, Central Board for Workers Education for gave me an opportunity. **Submitted by: R. Marimuthu, ZOO. Email: [marimuthu@zooreach.org](mailto:marimuthu@zooreach.org)**

### **AWF Celebrations at Vivekananda College of Arts and Science, Tiruchengode**

ZOO conducted the AWF 2016 programme in coordinated and hosted by the *Pantera leo* Club of the Department of Zoology, Vivekananda College of Arts and Science for Women at Tiruchengode, Erode District. About 150 graduate students from the department of Zoology attended the programme. During the inaugural the Principal of the college and the coordinator of the programme spoke about the need for the conservation of species and the importance of Animal Welfare Fortnightly. A talk on the species conservation and education was given by Daniel and as a part of the programme as series of



**Understanding habitat loss and animal welfare through map reading**

activities were conducted. Dr. B.A. Daniel and Mr. R. Marimuthu conducted a series of activities and demonstrated Conservation education process through active learning / teaching methods. Different issues related to wildlife welfare, conservation activities related to freshwater biodiversity and mitigation of human animal conflict were explained through active teaching methods. Immediate future actions that can be taken up by the participants were discussed. Committed participants conducted a procession holding placards within the campus and shared the information learned with their fellow students. Thanks to the management, and staff of the Department of Zoology, especially Dr. M. Brintha and Dr. M. Salahudeen for coordinating this event. **Submitted by B.A. Daniel, Education Coordinator, Zoo Outreach Organization. Email: [badaniel@zooreach.org](mailto:badaniel@zooreach.org)**