

Zoo Outreach Organization in collaboration with Society for Wildlife Interface and Forest Training (SWIFT), Tamil Nadu Forest Department, Tamil Nadu Forestry Training college and VANAM conducted five-day training programme for the 2017 batch of foresters of the Tamil Nadu Forest department. The programme was conducted at Tamil Nadu Forestry Training College, Vaigai, Theni district from 11-14 July 2017 and about 120 personnel took part in the training of which 38 of them were women candidates and the highlight

USFWS sponsored capacity building training programme on wildlife conservation monitoring

B.A. Daniel



The forest frontline staff are the cutting edge of the forestry hierarchy who are in constant touch with the people whose needs are met from the nature. They are instrumental in the implementation of the forest related rules, regulations, conservation and development activities. The frontline staff assists the forest department by providing basic data from the field while doing daily patrolling, monitoring and observations. This field level data has great significance as wrongly collected data can exaggerate and mislead the managers while planning conservation programmes. The efficiency and effectiveness of the State forest department hence depends much on the performance level of these personnel. Hence training is a strategic



Introduction to the training by Daniel

is that this is the first time the TN forest department is employing women personnel for the post and hence this training take special mention. The programme was fully sponsored by USFWS.

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Women trainees using GPS



Classroom interaction

requirement for forest frontline staff and hence training for these staff who serve in Protected areas.

This kind of trainings requires long term planning. Dr. V.K. Melkani, Principle Chief Conservator of Forests, and Dr Krishnakumar, PCCF, Head, Division of Wildlife encouraged a lot by suggesting importing topics and to frame the syllabus. They also helped us to identify the venue for the workshop and thus TNFA was approached. The then Chairman and Executive Director of Society for Wildlife Interface and Forestry Training SWIFT, Dr. Rajeev K. Srivastava agreed to take up this programme

through the society. K.K. Kaushal, CCF and Additional Director, TNFA extended all assistance to conduct this programme with the support of Dr Jayachandran, Ranger and in-charge of TNFTC, Vaigai.

The training, though it was officially started on the 11 July with an informal inauguration, the participants gathered on the previous day for registration

and orientation for the training. After registration the author, the coordinator of the training programme, gave the background of the programme and also an introduction to biodiversity, species status, causes of human animal conflict with particular reference to tiger and elephants, mitigation measures and the role of forest frontline staff in effective species and habitat conservation. Icebreaking activities were also conducted. They were also explained about the aims of the training and went through the entire syllabus of the training.

Dr. Peter Prem Chakravarthy, Annamalai Tiger Reserve, Mr. Thangaraj Paneer



Peter Prem setting up Camera trap

Selvam, Anamalai Tiger Reserve, Dr. Ramakrishnan, Assistant Professor, Wildlife Biology unit, Government Arts and Science college, Ooty, Dr. S. Paulraj, Director, Chennai Snake Park Trust, Mr. R. Marimuthu, ZOO, Dr. Rajakumar, Honorary Wildlife Warden, Theni, Dr. Kalaivanan, Veterinary Officer, Theni District, Mr. G.V. Ramesh Kumar, Senior Editor, Thinamalar, Madurai, Dr. Jayachandran, Ranger, TNFTC Vaigai acted as

tutors for the training and they were introduced.

Most of the topics in the training planned and covered were mainly to address the issues related to human-animal conflict and to improve protection of tiger and elephants and its habitats and thus the training had both classroom and field exercises incorporating basics of conservation biology, research methodology, causes and mitigation measure of human animal conflict with special reference to elephants and tiger, wildlife laws, crimes communication and education. During the training sufficient practice on the use of modern research

GPS, compass, photo documentation, mapping and camera traps were also taught. As an incentive the participants received reading materials and tool kits that they can use in their daily routine.

The entire content of the course has 12 units that includes, use of basic field survey equipment, making field observations and taking notes, describing wild habitats, wildlife patrol and monitoring, staff health and hygiene, tiger and elephant estimation techniques, wildlife protection and management of Protected areas, Wildlife law and enforcement, animal handling and care, human



Group Photo: Trainees and Trainers

elephant conflict, elephant corridors, and conservation management.

In addition to theory and practical sessions they were assigned group projects to complete before the end of the training period. The projects include, boundary marking using GPS and GIS maps, design and create waterhole and photo documentation of flora of the campus. Project guidelines were given to them and a mentor was assigned for each group to assist with the projects. Each participant got an opportunity to practice and contribute for the project since they were given sufficient field equipment

such as GPS, camera and binoculars to use during field projects. At the end of the project a representative from each group gave the project results and the outcome. In total the plant documentation group made a checklist of 165 plants / trees from the campus, boundary marking group learned how to track and mark boundary in a map and calculate the area, and the waterhole team practically learned how to design and construct a waterhole in a jungle and the resource requirements.

A typical day of the training day started at six O'clock with two-hour

project time. Each group will continue to work with their project and report to the mentor. The morning classroom session will start at 9 am that has both classroom and field exercises. Most of the afternoons were utilized for practical sessions where in they learned to use instruments like GPS, binoculars, compass, range finders and camera traps. Special events such as folklore and wildlife conservation, snake catching, practical





Jayachandran, Ranger, guiding to create a waterhole

training. The author takes this opportunity to thank USFWS for providing financial support to run the project, and the officials of Tamil nadu forest Department, SWIFT, NGOs for their support. The effort put by the resource persons requires special mention here since this is

journalism were organized that went up to 7 pm. Since the training was a residential programme, both the trainers and trainees got sufficient time to spend time together in the campus.

At the end of the training each participant received a certificate bearing the logo of USFWS and collaborators and a set of field kits having a back pack, rain coat and pants, a long range torch, water bottle, permanently printed instructions about do's and don'ts in Human

Elephant Conflict areas and a t-shirt. The equipment used for the training was



Human-animal conflict Training

left with the training centre for their use and future

teamwork. Cooperation extended by the trainees is commendable.



Ice breaker activity