

## Every Child a Scientist — ECAS MSSRF & ZOO — Wildlife Week

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Tribal and Rural children of Puthoorvayal Village of Wayanad along with Scientists of MSSRF observed wildlife week with various activities.

The Programme coordinator addressed children during an interactive session at the CABC seminar hall. Children performed a skit on "CONFIDENTIAL MESSAGE FROM THE WILD" an instantly created story about wild animals. The storyboard (summary) is attached else where.

Children along with Scientists performed a "Vana Yathra" at the Wildlife Sanctuary. They interacted with Forest Officials, District Tourism Department Officials and Forest Guides. The team was escorted to the wild by a tribal Resource Person who interacted with children about various incidents inside the forest. Children observed various wild fruit trees, butterflies, birds and plant and animal species.

Children discussed with tribal communities who were found collecting medicinal plants inside the forest. They enquired about their livelihood issues, food security, revenue, health and education of children.

The awareness materials provided by the Zoo Outreach Organisation were distributed to children with instructions and they wore masks, placards, etc. all of them during the trekking. Some of the materials including posters were handed over to the officials of Forest Department, public and childrens' relations. Children tied rakhies and took an oath on protection and preservation of wildlife. Children hugged and kissed the trees and promised to plant and protect trees in their surroundings.

"CONFIDENTIAL MESSAGE FROM THE WILD"

*I made close friendship with a Monkey- for me my most reliable friend. The friendship is been on for quite for some years while recently shocking news spilled out of my friend while we were in a 'Party'.*

*The message is very clear. Animal kingdom (of course no human animal) is organizing an international conference in 2020. Different associations of animals have already been registered and would conduct their internal meetings before the international conference to select their executive members and leaders. An immediate one my friend mentioned was the Bandhipur Elephants Association's charter meeting to be held in the coming days, somewhere in Wayanad. (God help us if it happens in any of our towns). Monkeys were asked to manage the communication part confidentially in the beginning, however did not workout satisfactorily since most of them were naughty and forgetful after their big meals in agricultural fields. Birds and butterflies are now identified effective and reliable communicators, said my friend and they also take care of the international mails and news during their migration period.*

*It's no joke- If at all these creatures by some evolutionary reasons could plan meetings or parties like us, we'd then*

*better look at reaching Mars or Moon immediately. I had lot of questions to ask my friend, but I'm afraid-I'll not be able to trace him as he is on a research tour. His research is basically on creating a database of some useful species among the deadly endangered human species on earth*

### About "Every Child a Scientist Centre"

The M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation has started a center called Every Child a Scientist Centre. Carl Sagan said : "Everybody starts out as a Scientist. Every child has the Scientist's a sense of wonder and awe"

The Centres activities are indebted to the Department of Biotechnology, Govt. of India, particularly Dr. Geetha Mehta, Friends of MSSRF and *Malayala Manorama*. This is a DST Funded Educational Programme for tribal and rural children

Children below poverty line and between 10 to 17 are eligible with selection based on both children's and parents interest. So far, the Centre has trained 130 children. This is an unique new venture by MSSRF to use information technology to enrich and enhance the development of children belonging to the most underprivileged sections of our society. It aims to use the tools of science and technology to bring the world of nature right into the lives of children and enable them to explore its secrets with joy and ease.

The main objectives of this programme are:  
Spread knowledge on biodiversity conservation and its sustainable and equitable use; Improve the quality of education using multimedia and IT; Create awareness on basis of health and hygiene, as well as environmental and civic issues; Explore and document the hidden talents of underprivileged children; Methodology; Friendly, informal and participatory atmosphere; No element of fear in interactions; Teaching with very little instructions; Learning by doing and finding out by themselves; Classroom without boundaries and no textbooks; Respecting cultural and traditional values; Exposure visits, Interviews, nature camps and projects.

The curriculum includes : Basic computer education, Medicinal plants study, Study on scarred trees, Observing butterflies and their host plants, Recognizing the values of ethnic food, Basic awareness on sustainable agriculture, Craft works using natural products, Personality development and stress management, Projects based on biodiversity conservation and environmental issues.

Some of the achievements of the programme are that children use computers with ease; their writing and reading skills improve and as a result they gain confidence and self respect Children become concerned on environmental issues by learning to identify, collect and propagate medicinal plants and to list their uses, acquiring basic knowledge on *in-situ* and *ex-situ* conservation. Childrens' academic performance improves and there is enhanced knowledge on traditional practices among children.

For more information about this programme you may contact : Knowledge Centre CABC, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation Community Agrobiodiversity Centre, Puthoorvayal P.O., Kalpetta, Wayanad, Kerala, India 673 121. PH: 04936-204477, 207019, 275189. E-mail: cabc@satyam.net.in cabcmssrf@eth.net.

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