Teachers for Tigers Workshop, 17-21 February 2003, Coimbatore - A Report

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Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), New York and Zoo Outreach Organisation (Z.O.O.) in India in collaboration with Coimbatore Municipal Corporation and Coimbatore Zoological Park conducted a five-day training workshop on conservation education using tigers as the theme at Coimbatore from 17-21 February 2003. The participants were 30 selected teachers from Corporation schools in and around Coimbatore, eight from private schools in Coimbatore and four from schools in Rajapalayam. The Resource persons were Mr. Tom Naiman and Mrs. Nalini Mohan from WCS. This is the first of the eight workshops to be held all over India this year and the second was conducted the following week at Chennai.

The programme was inaugurated by the Corporation Commissioner, Dr. D. Karthikeyan, I.A.S., Mrs. Nandini Rangaswamy, Managing Director, Chandra Textiles, Ms. Sally Walker, Z.O.O., Mr. Tom Naiman and Mrs. Nalini Mohan from WCS. The entire training was based on a Manual called *Teachers for Tigers* produced by WCS. The objective of the training was to educate teachers about the importance of tigers and their conservation through different educational methods such as games and activities.

The topics included were

Tiger ranges: Participants were given maps which they had to cut and paste together to learn about the historical and current distribution and subspecies of tigers based on the habitat types.

Characteristics and habits: The concepts of tiger hunting, camouflage, eating, speed etc. were demonstrated through exercises which participants can conduct for their students.

Tiger Timeline: To show the history of the status of tigers

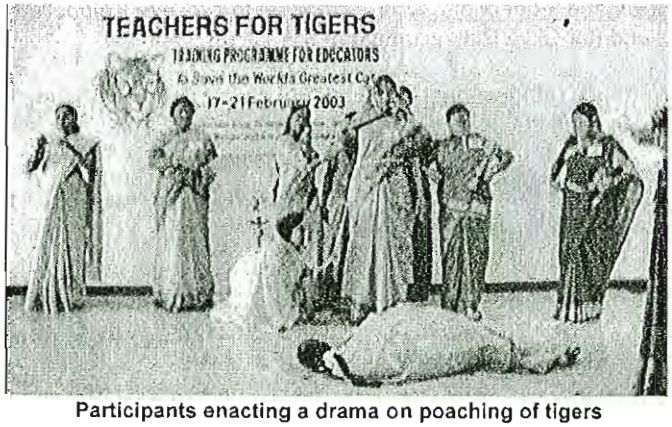
Tigers in mythology, art and culture: Participants listed stories, songs, poems, proverbs and other relevant references to tigers in different subjects to signify their importance.

Global perspectives role-play: Mini-dramas were enacted to show tiger behaviour and the bad effects of poaching.

Other topics: Tigers in Nagarhole National Park; census techniques of tigers; tiger medicine; planning an education programme on tigers and evaluation.

This training was entirely based on games and activities, discussions, presentations, mini-dramas, demonstrations, story-writing and planning education programmes. All the activities were conducted by Mr. Tom Naiman and Mrs. Nalini Mohan from WCS and the participants were enthusiastic throughout the workshop.

Z.O.O. made copies of the Manual for each participant and simple education packets called "Tiger Toolkit" which they can



Participants enacting a drama on poaching of tigers

Participants working in groups on different exercises

order and give to students at their education programmes based on the graphics from the Manual. Dr. Pramod Krishnan, Periyar Tiger Reserve gave a talk on conservation activities of PTR and Dr. Krishna Kumar on Role of Zoos in Conservation.

The participants were taken to the site of the future Coimbatore Zoological Park (CZP) site for a field trip. CZP is situated in the Western Ghats surrounded by hillocks and about 30 kms away from Coimbatore. The total area of the site is 250 acres and consists of many re-created habitats such as evergreen, semi-evergreen, deciduous, scrub, thorn, nullah, human settlement, plantation etc. A Tiger Trail was designed at the site in a manner in which the participants will be able to go through most of the habitat zones in the site and learn about tigers.

Pugmark method

The pugmark method of counting tigers and camera trapping was demonstrated. Masks of tiger, deer, wild boar, porcupine, langurs etc. were placed along the trek paths to explain the concept of habitat, prey - predator relationship, human-animal conflict and habitat destruction. The participants were asked to observe the birds and butterflies of the area and report their observations on an 'Adaptation Match' exercise. The species important to tigers and its prey species like langurs were also noted. Ecological pyramid and the position of tiger in the food chain including prey-predator relationship were discussed.

The participants were made to plan a similar education programme for their own school students using the materials provided to them at the workshop. A certificate of participation was also distributed.

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