

Zoo Education Material - The importance of localization

T. Kalaichelvan* and T. C. Chhatri**

Introduction : This paper is about Zoo Education material, its production and dissemination cycle. The preparation of well-designed Zoo Education material requires great deal of research and background work. The apt utilization of local cultural and religious beliefs for effective propagation of the message is accentuated. Also discussed is the information flow from experts to target groups through able educator. We emphasize the importance of localization of material as local conservation efforts lay the foundation for Global Conservation efforts undertaken by conservation agencies.

Chhattisgarh state situated in central India, where the author is working, is home to endemic species inhabiting yet unexplored virgin forests. This state boasts of one of the largest areas in terms of forest cover and largest of all Indian states in terms of tribal population.

The tribal people, wherever they are on the globe, have beliefs and rituals unique to each tribe. The local tribals around my place of work have a strong Hindu orientation. Hindu mythology has a peculiar aspect. Hindus have thousands of gods and goddesses and each one is associated with a particular wild animal. For example, the lion is associated with Mother goddess Durga, the snake to Shiva, Tiger to Ayyappan, Monkey to Hanuman, Elephant to Ganesh, Owl to goddess of wealth Laxmi, etc. The depiction of a god is incomplete without its associated animal. Conservation messages are better understood if the animal is discussed along with the underlying culture the target group believes in.

Observations of more than ten years revealed that assimilating the local culture with education material carries the message in an effective manner and yields visible results. The philosophy behind preparation of Zoo Education material, based on real life experiences at the local level, for effective end-user understanding is the major topic in this paper. The preparation of zoo education material chiefly consisting of study material, stickers, posters, placards, handouts, masks etc. with expert guidance is emphasized. This paper also describes how colour combinations, size, shape and depiction can bring desired results.

Taking benefit of local customs

Every tribe living close to nature away from civilized world has beliefs of their own. The material prepared should highlight their beliefs related to the nature and environment around them. Most tribes have a totem, for example mongoose, which is never killed or harmed by the tribe, hence other tribes related to the tribe also do not harm those totems. The people of other religions coexisting with Hindus in this region also do not kill owls

and monkeys as a mark of mutual appreciation. An owl is believed to be the vehicle of the Hindu goddess of wealth, Laxmi, so it is not killed by Hindus. A species is thus saved due to an age old belief. Many species can be better protected by exploiting local beliefs.

Preparation of material

The material should be designed by competent Graphic artists turned wildlife biologists or vice versa for professional quality output. Trained experts should be employed to prepare education material in consultation with subject experts as well as Zoo educators keeping target groups different levels in view. Prepared material should be comprehensible and customized to suit the age and education level of the target groups.

Posters

Posters are the biggest and most visible kind of communication matter to deliver the message. Incorporation of the following makes good posters:

- . The posters should be in simple and local language, understandable by locals.
- . The animal depicted in local settings like bird on a tree or tiger in jungle carries more relevance than a photo stuck on a marble tile.
- . An animal looks more attractive and invites attention when it is shown with the young ones. A bear or tiger with a playful cub looks more natural.
- . Wildlife species recognisable to the target group being educated, are more easily understood, therefore study material should be area specific.
- . Invertebrates are the most ignored creatures but good quality posters and photographs of snails, butterflies, caterpillars, beetles, corals etc., on glossy paper carrying basic information related to wildlife laws make their way to homes, shops & public places.
- . Posters carrying the quotations of locally prominent/respected personalities, containing 4 to 5 lines of message will be very effective, such as : - *Sacrifice of Animals in the name of religion is a remnant of barbarism* - Mahatma Gandhi; - *Animals are free from sin; No human being can make that claim* - Rev. Adkins; - *A person who cares about the earth will resonate with its purity* - Sally Fox
- . Poster colours should be earthy or at best those depict the natural habitat of the animal or bird any loud colour in extreme contrast could damage the visual effect. Some of the posters prepared by Zoo Outreach Organization have been so-much appreciated and received enthusiastically by visitors. For

* Zoo Supervisor, Maitri Baag Zoo, Steel Authority of India Ltd., Bhilai

** AGM, Horticulture Deptt, Steel Authority of India Ltd., Bhilai Steel Plant

instance the poster of Manipur Deer prepared by the Z.O.O. is a subject of attraction in the author's office since 1994. The beautiful poster depicts the deer in magnificence in its natural habitat and captures the attention of every visitor, compelling them to ask what it is. Other posters like South Asian Primates, Vultures, Bats 'N' Rats etc. prepared by Z.O.O. are liked by one and all.

Masks & Placards

Masks/placards have the quality of attracting children to them. Animal masks distributed with pamphlets containing a short play enacting different animal characters encourage children to role play and thus grasp the message faster. It is observed that children from small villages are more attracted to such things.

Stickers

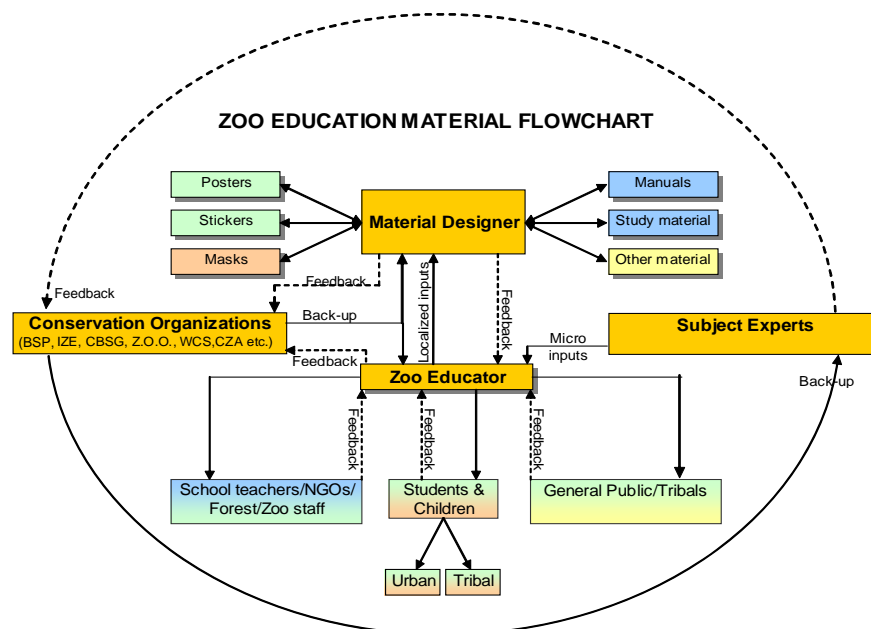
The author routinely makes an observation about the post distribution usage of Stickers. The observation revealed that stickers that are round and colorful are very much liked. For example, WCS Tiger sticker prepared by Z.O.O. is very popular. This sticker made its way to many shops, schools and public places. I also observed that square/rectangular stickers are either returned politely or discarded after a glance. The stickers hence need to be colorful and round with waterproof coating. Stickers with night glow or fluorescent coating become an instant hit among children.

Rakhis

Rakhi is a talisman in the form of a wrist bracelet tied to brothers by sisters wishing them good-luck and safety. Z.O.O. has popularized the concept of tying rakhis with pictures of wildlife. Rakhi tying also involves swearing an oath to protect the endangered animal.

Concepts like Rakhi can be adopted and suitably modified according to local customs of the country which would include taking an oath swearing never to harm wildlife/environment.

Informational booklets



Zoo Education Material flowchart

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Informational booklets with specific/advance information meant for experts like Forest officials, Zoo staff, Wildlife/Environmental activists, teachers etc. should elaborate. For instance, Tiger manual by W.C.S./Z.O.O. was appreciated by these groups.

On the other hand, information booklets for non-experts should be as graphical, colorful and brief as possible with very basic information in order to be well-received by general public as well as children.

Signboards

The information on signboards displayed inside Zoos, parks etc. are given a glanced of no more than a minute by a passerby. The signboards hence are more effective if they are concise, brief. Some research on visitor behavior is needed before installing such boards.

Conclusion

The author concludes that local culture/customs should be taken into consideration for preparation of conservation education material. Some thorough research encompasses the micro details

discussed in this paper, before preparation would help create custom made material for activists working on zoo education projects at the local level.

The education material produced by W.C.S., New York and Z.O.O., Coimbatore, India are found to be very useful and adaptable for better results in conservation education programs in countries like India.

Conservation aimed at local themes can accomplish a global effect thus attesting to the famous slogan 'Our Planet Our Home - Think Global Act Locally'

Acknowledgement

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Ms. Sally Walker, Zoo Outreach Organisation.

Management of Steel Authority of India Ltd. Bhilai Steel Plant, Bhilai- Our employer.

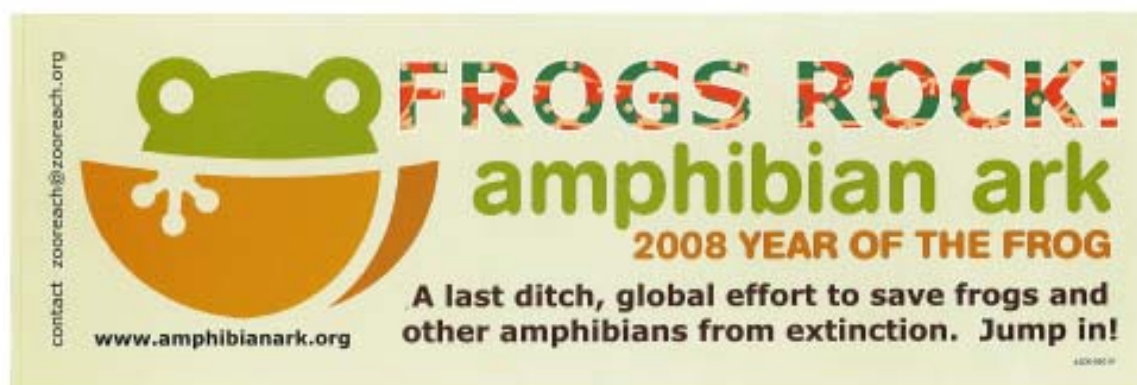


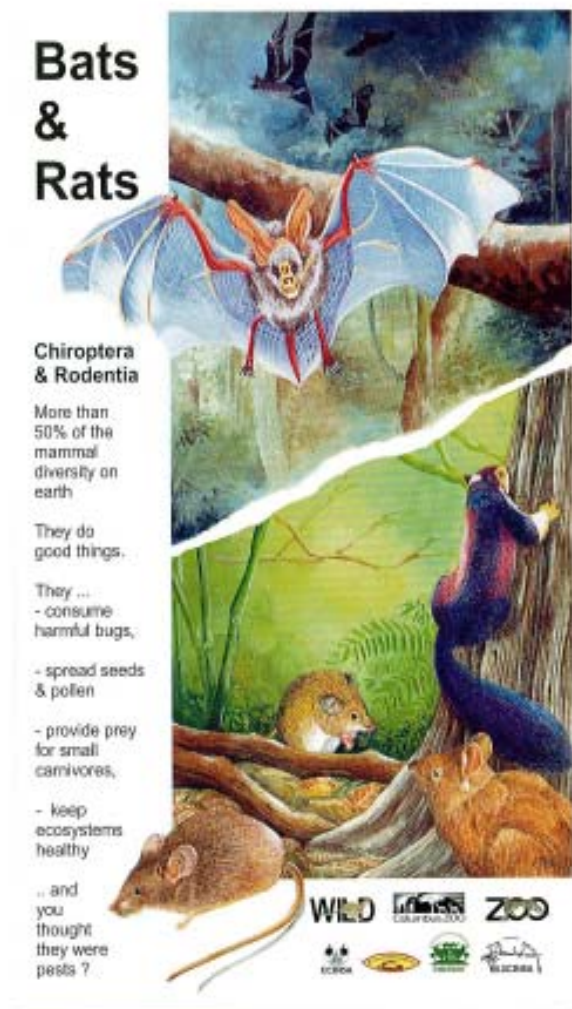
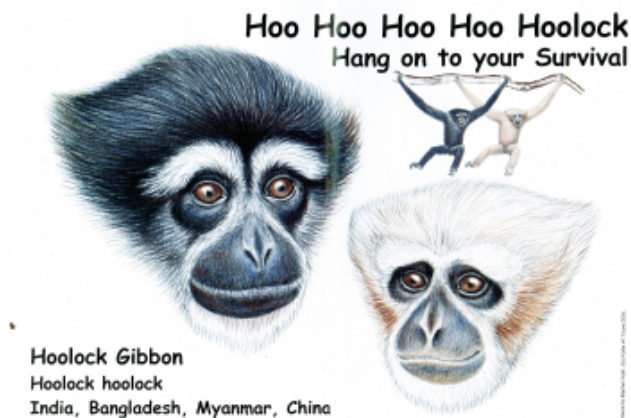
ASIAN BEARS



Dare to Care for Bears

Zoo Outreach Organisation, ZOO/International Bear Foundation, 188
Post Box 1683, Peelamedu, Coimbatore 641004, Tamil Nadu, India
email: zooreach@vsnl.com; website: www.zooreach.org





South Asian Primates

The chart displays 30 species of South Asian primates, each with a drawing and its name in English and Hindi. The species are arranged in rows, showing a variety of colors and postures. The species are:

- 1. **Asian Brown Bear** (Asiatic Brown Bear)
- 2. **Asian Black Bear** (Asiatic Black Bear)
- 3. **Asian Golden Bear** (Asiatic Golden Bear)
- 4. **Asian Red Bear** (Asiatic Red Bear)
- 5. **Asian Black Bear** (Asiatic Black Bear)
- 6. **Asian Brown Bear** (Asiatic Brown Bear)
- 7. **Asian Black Bear** (Asiatic Black Bear)
- 8. **Asian Golden Bear** (Asiatic Golden Bear)
- 9. **Asian Red Bear** (Asiatic Red Bear)
- 10. **Asian Black Bear** (Asiatic Black Bear)
- 11. **Asian Brown Bear** (Asiatic Brown Bear)
- 12. **Asian Black Bear** (Asiatic Black Bear)
- 13. **Asian Golden Bear** (Asiatic Golden Bear)
- 14. **Asian Red Bear** (Asiatic Red Bear)
- 15. **Asian Black Bear** (Asiatic Black Bear)
- 16. **Asian Brown Bear** (Asiatic Brown Bear)
- 17. **Asian Black Bear** (Asiatic Black Bear)
- 18. **Asian Golden Bear** (Asiatic Golden Bear)
- 19. **Asian Red Bear** (Asiatic Red Bear)
- 20. **Asian Black Bear** (Asiatic Black Bear)
- 21. **Asian Brown Bear** (Asiatic Brown Bear)
- 22. **Asian Black Bear** (Asiatic Black Bear)
- 23. **Asian Golden Bear** (Asiatic Golden Bear)
- 24. **Asian Red Bear** (Asiatic Red Bear)
- 25. **Asian Black Bear** (Asiatic Black Bear)
- 26. **Asian Brown Bear** (Asiatic Brown Bear)
- 27. **Asian Black Bear** (Asiatic Black Bear)
- 28. **Asian Golden Bear** (Asiatic Golden Bear)
- 29. **Asian Red Bear** (Asiatic Red Bear)
- 30. **Asian Black Bear** (Asiatic Black Bear)

Eastern Japanese Macaque
Macaca acromiolaris japonensis

Indian Monkeys Macaque
Macaca mulatta mulatta

Mountain Long-tailed Macaque
Macaca mulatta umbellata

Western Japanese Macaque
Macaca acromiolaris popuza

Pale-tailed Brown Macaque
Macaca radiata albida

Dark-tailed Brown Macaque
Macaca radiata radiata

Gray Zebra Topus Macaque
Macaca zebra zebra

Western Himalayan Langur
Simulapithecus arbuscula

Mal Zebra Topus Macaque
Macaca zebra aurilorum

Southern Grounded Howl Zebra
Simulapithecus velutina velutina

Bangal Rhesus Langur
Simulapithecus arbuscula

Transmolder Wap Langur
Simulapithecus prasinus

Central Himalayan Langur
Simulapithecus velutina velutina

Gray Langur
Simulapithecus velutina velutina

Golden Rhesus Langur
Simulapithecus arbuscula

