

Zoo Outreach Organization's Wildlife Week fete with Coimbatore Schools R. Marimuthu*

Vidya Vanam School, Anaikatti, Wildlife Week Inauguration, 2 October

According to the Constitution of India, under Article 51A (g) - Fundamental Duties which reads as "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creature". To create awareness on wildlife conservation and compassion on living creatures, Government of India celebrates Animal Welfare Fortnightly, Van Mahotsav and Wildlife Week. Forest department, zoological gardens, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and others have been observing this every year and creating awareness on wildlife conservation and compassion on animals.

Wildlife Week has been celebrated in India since 1955. First wildlife day was celebrated in 7 July 1955 and later it became a wildlife week and celebrated in the first week of October from 02-08 October. October 2nd is Mahatma Gandhiji's birthday and once he said that "The earth has enough resources for our need, but not for our greed". So it is apt to start the week on his birthday. It is celebrated through different awareness activities in the country to promote wildlife conservation.

Zoo Outreach Organization inaugurated this event on October 2nd at Vidya Vanam School at Anaikatti, Coimbatore. Bhuvana Foundation runs this school for underprivileged children mostly tribal and others. About 40 students of class VI-VIII participated in this awareness programme. The students were told about: Mahatma Gandhiji's quote on nature, the fundamental duties of Indian citizen in protecting the nature, history of wildlife week, objectives, creating



Learning about South Asian Primate Species



Students wearing elephant head band

awareness to different stakeholders. Further they taught about what is wildlife including daily life wildlife, India's great diversity of natural ecosystems and it has its own species, wildlife diversity of India such as it has 8% of world's biodiversity though its land area is only about 2.4%, the total figures of flowering plants, invertebrates, fishes, amphibians, birds and mammals

found in India which is about 1,33,000 species. Also they informed about lands of diversity-forests, wetlands and coasts, one of the mega biodiversity countries out of 17 in the world, the major threats to Indian wildlife-habitat destruction which leads to habitat fragmentation, poaching, pollution,

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Looking at Western Ghats dragonflies



Taking a pledge not to buy animal products



Very passionate in wearing masks



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introduction to exotic species and climate change.

Further they were told about the current status of Indian wildlife, the extinct Indian Cheetah and Pink-headed duck, gave some examples of species under threat such as tiger, rhino, lion, elephants, vultures, hoolock gibbon, amphibians, fishes and insects and the reasons for their threat, the ecosystem services provided by wildlife such as livelihood support, health and food security, economic, ethical, scientific, cultural and aesthetic values, protection of wildlife by Government through *insitu* and *exsitu* conservation projects such as project tiger, elephant, crocodile, rhino and creation of biosphere reserves, national parks, sanctuaries-the laws related to wildlife protection-Wildlife Protection Act 1972 and The Biological Diversity Act 2002. At the end the students were told about the role of individuals in protecting wildlife. They were also taught about Western Ghats biodiversity.

Since the students are from Human Elephant Conflict Areas HEC, Zoo Outreach Organization's ele-kit packet was used in the programme. The packet items were explained to the students and asked them to read the information in the booklet. Then they were very eager to tying the wrist band to each other, putting on the headband, finger puppets, elephant masks and holding the placard pledging not to buy products made up of elephant body parts and other animals too. Zoo Outreach Organization's other education materials were displayed in order to students understand the diversity of animal species found in India. Thanks to Ms. Prema Rangachary, Director and Mr. Prakhar Gaur, Volunteer, Science & Computer and Mr. Rajesh Barasara, English teacher, for the permission and arranging this programme on a holiday.



ZOO's education materials were used teach about animal diversity in India



Understanding Western Ghats reptile diversity

Wildlife Week valedictory at Govt. Tribal Residential High School, Muttathuvayal, Coimbatore

On 08 October, another wildlife awareness programme was held at GTR High School, Muttathuvayal, Coimbatore during wildlife week valedictory. About 40 students aged 11-14 attended the programme. A talk on "Wildlife diversity of India and its Conservation" was given which predominantly covered India's wildlife diversity richness, different ecosystems and the species which live on, mega biodiversity countries, biodiversity hotspots, Western Ghats biodiversity, major threats to wildlife, endangered animals, extinct animals of India, values of wildlife, Government's protection of wildlife through laws and projects and the student's role in conservation of Indian wildlife. Zoo Outreach Organizations various education materials and pocket guides on amphibians, bats, primates, elephants, fishes, odonates, plants, reptiles were circulated among them to understand and learn the diversity of fauna and flora found in India. They watched a documentary on tigers at the end. As a complimentary each student got ZOO's animal greeting card.



Fruit bats cards



Students with ZOO's complimentary greeting cards



Learning about reptile species of Western Ghat



Watching documentary on Tigers