

Leaping Ahead of Amphibian Extinction....a celebration of good news for amphibians in 2012 in South Asia coordinated by ZOO

Complied by R. Marimuthu

Amphibian Ark, a joint effort of World Association of Zoos and Aquariums WAZA, Conservation Breeding Specialist Group CBSG and Amphibian Specialist Group ASG, launched a new "event" to coincide with "Leap Day" on 29 February 2012. It is an international event, called "Leaping Ahead of Extinction: A celebration of good news for amphibians in 2012. Though this event was focused globally on institutions that are conserving amphibian species in the captivity and involving in conservation activities that are being carried out in the wild. Zoo Outreach Organisation coordinated this programme for the South Asian region.

Since South Asian zoos doesn't keep amphibians in captivity, so we mainly focused the day by simply creating awareness among people about amphibians importance in the ecosystem. Our educator network members have been asked to carry out this task. Sixteen institutions from India and one each from Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan participated in this event.

Within the short time, Zoo Outreach Organisation reprinted AArk's leap day posters, plus supplied 5 kinds of amphibian masks, colouring books, South Asian Amphibian posters and amphibian education packets to Indian participants and for Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan participants we had the soft copies of the materials. Overall, we supplied 1000 posters, 250 South Asian Amphibian posters, 1500 masks and 150 Colouring books. The following educators from India, Nepal and Bangladesh participated in this event and created mass awareness on that day. The following persons/ institutions participated in this event.

India

1. Mr. Dilip Chakravarty, Project Officer, CEE, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh
2. Mr. Vinodkumar Damodar, Conservation of Nature Society, Calicut, Kerala
3. Ms. Jessie Jeyakaran, Volunteer Educator, Ramapuram, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
4. Ms. Rani Kirubairaj, Teacher, C.C.M. Hr. Sec. School, Idayangudi, Tirunelveli. Dist., Tamil Nadu.
5. Dr. S. Sethuramalingam, Scientist E, Regional Museum of Natural History, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh
6. Dr. Amita Kanaujia, Associate Professor, Lucknow University, Uttar Pradesh
7. Ms. Gayathri Selvaraj, Education Officer, Madras Crocodile Bank Trust,

Tamil Nadu

8. Dr. A. Selvin Samuel, Professor, St. Johns College, Palayamkottai, Tamil Nadu
9. Dr. A. Manimozhi, Biologist (SG), Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Vandalur, Tamil Nadu
10. Mr.B. Rathinasabapathy, Project Coordinator, Nilgiri Biosphere Nature Park, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu
11. Mr. Anand Pendharkar, SPROUTS, Mumbai, Maharashtra
12. Dr. Puja Vijay Sukhija, Executive Director-OASIS, Mumbai, Maharashtra
13. Dr. K. V. Rao, Director, Pilikula Regional Science Center, Mangalore, Karnataka
14. Mr. K. Packianathan, Eco club Co-ordinator, St. Xavier's Hr. Sec. School, Palayamkottai, Tamil Nadu
15. Ms. Pratibha Singh IFS, District Forest Officer, Unnao, Uttar Pradesh
16. R. Marimuthu, Zoo Outreach Organisation (for use in Indian Zoo Educators Workshop at Bhopal)

Other South Asian Countries

17. Ms. Rachana Shah, Central Zoo, Kathmandu, Nepal
18. Mr. Mongur Morshed Choudhury, Chittagong Zoo, Bangladesh
19. Ms. Bushra Nisar Khan, Lahore, Pakistan

All of them arranged an amphibian awareness programme on that day and sent us their reports. Two of the reports R. Marimuthu from ZOO and Ms. Gayathri Selvaraj of MCBT were published in March 2012 issue of ZOOS PRINT magazine. The remaining reports are here:

B. Rathinasabapathy, Nilgiri Biosphere Nature Park, Coimbatore, TN

NBNP organized a programme to the Govt. Tribal Residential School, Anaikatti on the 29 February 2012. Fifty students of 9 & 10 Std aged 14-15 took part in the one-hour event.



Tribal school students participated in the leap day event



Whoever won in the frog race received amphibian colouring book as prize



Leaping as frogs for the amphibian conservation



Students playing frog puzzle game



Teachers and students with amphibian education kits

The event comprised of small brief about the theme "Leaping Ahead of Extinction, global amphibians diversity and the Western Ghats amphibians diversity. Small interactive session with the students especially to highlight the threats faced by amphibians locally and globally and the necessary step to conserve them was conducted. A frog walk event was organized to the students to teach them about the frog locomotion. All the students have taken pledge to conserve the amphibians. Amphibians colouring book was given to the winners of the frog walk event. AARk Posters and masks were given to rest of the students.

Dr. Amita Kanaujia, Lucknow University, Uttar Pradesh

Department of Zoology, Lucknow University organized Leap Day (February 29, 2012) with the support of Uttar Pradesh State Biodiversity Board, Regional Science City, Lucknow, Zoo Outreach Organisation ZOO, and Amphibian Network of South Asia ANSA, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India. The programme was conducted at Regional Science City, Aliganj, Lucknow, involving students of class 5-8. The aim of the programme was to raise awareness regarding Amphibian Conservation among the students through various competitions based on Amphibian topics. About 162 students participated in quiz, 190 students wrote slogans on amphibian conservation, more than 50 students participated in frog leap, 126 students participated in art competition and 8 groups of 4 students each participated in puzzle making. In all more than 300 students participated in the events. More than 200 on amphibians were distributed among the students and teachers. The celebration of Leap Day was a multi-disciplinary integrated approach for amphibian conservation. The purpose of this day was to teach students the importance of amphibians and the need of every citizen to contribute to what has become a monumental task. This programme created mass public awareness and support for amphibian conservation activities through targeted campaigns and formal and non-formal education. The unforgettable objectives were to build partnerships with local and traditional communities for effective amphibian conservation.

Ms. Rani Kirubairaj, Teacher, CCM Hr. Sec. School, Idayangudi, Tirunelveli

Report 1: Samariah St. John's Hr. Sec. School participated in the International Event- "Leap Day" on 29 Feb 2012 by



Amphibian information board was set up in the school campus



Students handled the frogs and released them where they catch



Students were taken to nearby pond to study about frogs

celebrating Leaping Ahead of Extinction Programme. At 9.00 am, std 6-12 students and staff gathered. Advocate A.K.Seenivasan, Town Panchayat President was the chief guest; Correspondent Dr. J.I.P. Rajan graced the function. Head Master W. Joel Revingston delivered the introductory talk on the amphibians and their role in our environment. The following science club students conducted a seminar. Muthu Manohari-How to conserve frogs?; Felix-Toads; Agnes-Salamander; Scindia-Caecilian; Jenson-Indian hyalid frog; Delpin Jane Mini-Malabar Ramanella; Isai Rajakumar-Cricket frog; Usha Sherlin-Marble frog and Sudharson-Extinct Dinosaur.

All wore the frog masks supplied by Zoo Outreach Organisation, Coimbatore. National Green Crops girl students belonging to 9 Std enacted a drama. The students raised slogans about protecting the Amphibians. Placards and photographs of some rare kinds of frogs were exhibited. Mr. Basker P.G. Assistant and Head Master read out the Leap Day pledge. It was useful and enlightened every one. Ms. Vijai Margaret P.G. Zoology Teacher made the arrangements.

Report-2: CCM Hr. Sec. School participated in the 'International Event' "Leap Day" 29th Feb 2012 by celebrating Leaping Ahead of Extinction Programme. At 9.00 A.M. Std 6 – 9 Students of our school, our feeder schools, Middle school and Primary School Head Masters, Staff and students, Village president C. Jeygar and 35 village workers gathered in the school premise. Head Master J.C.A.D. Rajakumar welcomed the gathering. Our Chief Guest Dr. Solomon gifted a book 'Discovering Wildlife-The Ultimate Fact File' to our school library. He inspired the gathering by explaining how frogs are important in the food chain, its medicinal and aesthetic values and also he mentioned about poisonous frogs. He said that we should keep our water bodies clean and tidy as our own abode to safeguard the frogs. President Jeygar said, 'there are much to learn about frogs', I knew some of these facts just now after hearing the talk. National Green Corps boys wore the masks of different frogs and enacted a drama. The NGC girls sang an awareness song – on the leap day let us be glad, sing & dance because the people are going to conserve us, the ponds have stone banks and trees are planted there, water is clean'. SPM Manohar read the Leap day pledge,

Head Master Rajakumar mentioned that we must allow all living creatures

to survive in this world. NGC coordinator Rani Kirubairaj narrated a story – frogs decided not to disturb the humans and stopped singing at nights. On the third night one girl told her friend that she had restless two nights – No ‘Croaking’ of frogs. Then the frogs continued singing at nights. It’s ‘Nature’. She described the food of various frogs by using the colouring books supplied by Zoo Outreach Organisation. She said ‘ponds are there’ – but no ‘frogs’.

An evaluation was carried out. In this, village workers admitted that they used to chase off frogs using brooms and frogs turned upside down. They said that, hereafter they will be kind to them. T. Vignesh studying in 7 Std said that until 3 std he scared to see frogs. Afterwards he used to catch them and tie their limbs together and play, while he was bathing in the well he used to throw away the frogs. After hearing about the frogs he said that he wouldn’t do like this in his life. A bulletin board was displayed with enlarged frog information which taken from ZOO’s education materials and this board was visited by all. Sixty-five class 6 students submitted frog drawings on that day.

Dr. A. Manimozhi, Biologist (SG), AAZP & Ms. Jessie Jeyakaran, Volunteer Educator, Chennai

Forty six students from MCC Campus Matriculation School, 36 students from Murray Rabindhra School and 40 students from MCC NSS, Tambaram, Chennai were attended. Mrs. Jessie welcomed the gathering and that it was a leap day, a leap year and a leaping animal that we are going to talk about and have gathered here to participate in the outreach programme conducted by the Aringnar Anna Zoological Park. Mrs. Jessie said that the “Amphibian Ark” programme was started in 2008. Pamphlets and awareness programme were conducted and frog sightings were recorded till 2011. Following that Leaping beyond extinction is introduced in this Leap Day. A brief introduction was given by Dr. Yagnasekar, NSS coordinator, MCC, Tambaram. The chief guest Mr. Sugato Dutt, I.F.S., Deputy Director, Aringnar Anna Zoological Park enlightened the participants about importance of 29 February 2012 and he asked the participants why we gathered here. He explained that we were celebrating the amphibians, as they were in the verge of extinction. He also explained the meaning of “Amphi” meaning double and “bians” meaning organism. These organisms live both in water and in land. He said those twenty years ago, Kelambakkam



Aark leap posters supplied by ZOO introduced to the students



Students with AARK poster and wearing amphibian masks



Quiz programme: winners awarded with amphibian colouring book and poster

had many agricultural fields and ponds were home for number of frog species. But, now in 2012, the fields have been given away to IT buildings and developmental activities. Even the nearby Otteri Lake has very few frog species because concrete buildings surround the lake and there is no inflow of water. As frogs are the biological indicator of the environmental changes, they provide early warning system. The zoo is planning to have a separate enclosure for amphibians and he asked suggestions from the participants of how they would like to see the amphibian in enclosure.

Dr. A. Manimozhi, spoke on how frogs played a vital role in our environment and in our lives by being a pest controller and a food for the other species on our food web. He also cleared the myth that diseases will spread if we touch a toad, which is not true. He concluded his speech encouraging the participants to promote awareness on the significant

role of frogs in maintain ecological balance and all living organisms from the tiny bacteria to the biggest whale have infinite value and we have to respect their existence. The children were encouraged to keep frogs as pets too. Mr. A.J. Mithra, Musicologist and music teacher of MCC Campus Matriculation School, divided the participants into different groups and taught the different croaks of the frogs with a musical rhythm. He also taught a song composed for the occasion and the children of MCC Campus School, rendered his catchy fulfilled song while the others learnt it. Dr. A. Manimozhi and Mrs. Jessie Jeyakaran explained about the amphibians, besides distributing the special poster printed for the Leap Day. They also inspected the students to decentralize their experience to friends, parents, and neighbours and to the people in the parks and picnic spots. End of the event a quiz programme were organized and the winners were provided price materials issued by Zoo Outreach Organisation, Ciombatore.

Dr. Ranjit Sam, the zoo veterinary officer gave away the prizes to the winners of the quiz competition and all the participants took an oath to help protect all living species, especially frogs.

Finally all the participants went around the zoo and created awareness among the visiting schools and general visitors from different parts of the State and also from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka on frog conservation. The participants expressed their sincere thanks to ZOO Outreach Organization, Amphibian Ark, Arignar Anna Zoological Park and the coordinators.

Mr. Dilip Chakravarthy, CEE & Dr. Sethuramalingam, RMNH, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

Leap year day comes once in four years. Similarly frogs are known for their leaping behavior. Hence today it has been chosen to highlight the leaping animal frog and their importance in the ecosystem service as a pest manager. This international event arranged at RMNH jointly with RMNH, Bhopal and CEE called "Leaping Ahead of Extinction: A celebration of good news for amphibians in 2012" is conducted to simply create an awareness among people that amphibians are important to ecosystems, harmless to human beings except in rare cases of disease or allergy. They are declining severely in the wild due to habitat destruction and severe climate change. Hence RMNH today released Frog as a symbolic gesture to enhance the ecosystem service of the man - made lake at Sunken Bridge. The resource person was Shri Joseph Kujur and Shri Dilip Chakravarthy drawn from CEE, Bhopal.

The objective of the programme was to spread amphibian conservation message to everyone, to understand and convey that all have a responsibility to take care of our precious planet. At RMNH campus along with few hundred students, the Regional Museum of Natural History, Bhopal along with Centre for Environment Education, CEE observed this 'Leap Day' by conducting activities and programmes on Amphibians. Along with the lecture, activities and games, the students of Govt. Naveen Hr.Sec.School, Arera Colony, Govt. Naveen Hr. Sec. School, Chunna Bhatti and Govt. Rajabhoj Hr. Sec. School numbering 100 attended the programmes. Special poster and Packets on "Frogs are part of Biodiversity" were distributed to all participants. Mr. Amol Adholiya from Govt. Naveen Hr. Sec. School, Arera



Students tying amphibian rakhi pledging to conserve amphibians



Dr. S. Sethuramalingam, released a live frog to the Sunken bridge



AArk posters distributed to the students

Colony, Mrs. Jyoti Saxena from Govt. Rajabhoj Hr. Sec. School and Mrs. Sunita Pataria from Govt. Naveen Hr. Sec. School, Chunna Bhatti participated in the programme.

Dr. S. Sethuramalingam, Scientist-E, heading the museum, welcomed the gathering and then released a live frog to the Sunken Bridge Ecosystem while hundreds of children witnessed. The resource materials received from Zoo Outreach Organization, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu were distributed to students and general public. Shri Manik Lal Gupta, Educational Assistant was the coordinator of the programme.

Dr. V. K. Rao, Director, Pilikula Regional Science Centre, Mangalore, Karnataka
Zoo Outreach Organization, Coimbatore took the initiative for

celebration of World Amphibian leap day by involving Pilikula Regional Science Centre, Mangalore for the Eco Club students of Govt. High School, Moodushedde. About 50 students participated in the programme. Masks and posters regarding amphibians donated by Zoo Outreach Organization were distributed among the students. The Resource person involved in planning the programme told the significance of the Amphibian day to the students. Mr. Jagannath, Education Assistant, PRSC, Mangalore & Miss Priyanka, Education Assistant, PRSC, Mangalore spoke about the Amphibians and their importance. Other Environmental games were also conducted to make the students love the animals and tell them that no animal on earth is so cruel except man. There is a need to protect Amphibians as they are becoming nearly extinct. Mrs. Swathi, Teacher of the High

school, was also present during the programme. Students did painting in the colouring books, which were distributed to them in groups. Prizes were awarded and children enjoyed the programme. PRSC thanks Zoo Outreach Organization for its encouragement in providing all the demonstration materials and posters for the programme. The Headmaster and teachers for the school deserve special thanks for their kind cooperation for helping PRSC in celebrating the day.

Vinod Kumar Damodar, Conservation of Nature Society, Calicut, Kerala

The Conservation of Nature Society organized the 'LEAP DAY' 2012 to create awareness on the protection of Amphibians. The newly found amphibians from the 'Western Ghats' were the core subjects of the programme. The programme organized in the Regional Science Centre on the 29.02.2012. Students and their teachers participated. The students performed a drama on frog conservation. The increasing tourism shown through a drama by the students and its effect on the Amphibian LEAP was the main attraction.

The threats faced by the wetlands and the forests, why the frogs are not able to leap in the Western Ghats due to the severe fire in the area and due to huge destruction of the Bamboo forests etc were discussed. The Press was keen to know the drawing done with the ZOO amphibian education materials which showed how the frogs/amphibians could not leap because of the man made fires.



Moodushedde High School students are keen in learning about amphibian conservation