

Intensive Conservation Education Skills Training INCEST

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ZOO/ South Asian Network of International Zoo Educators SANIZE started the first conservation educator skills training programme in July 2007 to introduce active learning tools for wildlife educators. Subsequently two other training workshops were planned and organised in June and July 2008. All these three workshops were conducted with the financial support of Wildlife Conservation Society WCS, Bronx, NY. The prime reason for the induction of an initiative at ZOO was to organize a series of training programmes throughout the year to reach a range of people who are involved in teaching, wildlife management, conservation and individuals interested in wildlife conservation.

Target group and selection

For all three workshops we invited carefully selected educators viz., zoo personnel, zoo volunteers, school teachers, museum educators, students, NGOs, and individuals in different post from forest departments, colleges, and university departments. In the above three workshops a total of 56 educators representing 22 institutes from four South Indian states such as Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu were benefited. The three groups will include 32 teachers, 7 NGOs, 10 students from university and colleges, 2 researchers, 2 forest department personnel, and 3 zoo volunteers.

Methodology

ZOO/SANIZE and WCS conducted about 13 workshops for conservation educators in India, Nepal and Bangladesh using Teaches for Tigers manual. The T4T manual has a systematic approach and teaching tools which can be tried with a wide range of audience from child to adult including both literate and illiterate audience. Based on these teaching tools and with necessary changes and incorporation of new concepts like Conservation Assessment and Management Plan (CAMP) workshop process and Population Habitat and Viability Assessment (PHVA) workshops suitable for South Asian audience, ZOO had developed a teachers guide on Hoolock gibbon 'Helping Hoolock Gibbon Hang On' with the financial assistance of USFWS and another manual on Sloth bear with the support of ALERTIS, Fund for bear and nature conservation, The Netherlands. The guide includes a wide range of active teaching tools such as games, drama, mapping activity, field activities, role play, the work of conservation biologists, indoor and outdoor activities, debate, mock CAMP /PHVA exercises, evaluation tool and other topics. A portion of Sloth bear guide was introduced in the 2 workshop and all of it in the third workshop.

All activities, whether they are simple games or brain and body-breaking activities, are intended to teach something about the theme such as the biology of the animal, how they influence human culture, how field biologists work to gather data on wildlife, how data is used to make conservation decision, etc.

Objectives

These workshops focused mainly on wildlife teaching. During the programme we provided effective and easy-to-use teaching tools featuring a wildlife theme, which they could apply to any topic about which they need to teach. The training also provides a source of effective activities and teaching strategies to reach children. Simple evaluation tools for assessing the efficacy of different techniques that should be tried before and after a programme were also taught. Our objective was to help educators improve their teaching by using active-learning techniques which produce more effective delivery and improved response from learners.

Each training had a different agenda to reflect the needs of the groups invited, as well as to serve ZOO's own needs. One of our needs was to test some new education material developed by ZOO/SANIZE. Though the training theme is almost invariably on wildlife teaching, the programme agenda and teaching tools revolved around a particular species. Tiger was the subject taken for the first batch, while the second batch learned about wildlife in general as their subject focusing activities related to bears, primates and tiger. The third batch had *Sloth bear* as the subject. In all the teaching methodology was the same.

Training structure

All the contents of the training programme were covered in three days which will start at 9.15 am that will continue until 5.45 pm with a break of 45 minutes lunch time. Depending on the time and convenience tea will be supplied while working or there will be a break of 15 minutes in the morning and evening. All trainees received registration materials that will include a folder, scribble pad, pen, name tag, sample education packets and the agenda. There will be no formal inaugural for the three day workshops.

During the workshop the trainees will be divided in to three groups since they will be doing group activities most of the time and in between individual activities. It is important that all the participants know each other well so that the group energy level can be raised during group activities. This was achieved through an ice breaker activity. This also helps the organizers to know the real interest skills of the trainee that can be guided for future education programmes in their working places.

The educators manual used during the training has many units in it. Unit 1 will include assessment techniques; unit 2 will have topics to understand the

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basic information such as scientific name, its systematic position in the classification, biology of the animal and past and present distribution details of the animal; Unit 3 will include activities to understand how animals have influenced human culture; Unit 4 will include activities to understand the scientific methods to study animals in the wild, creating national parks to protect species, understanding problems while implementing conservation projects etc and Unit 5 will include activities to understand species problems and solutions to save the species.

In all three workshops assessment techniques like Brain mapping, attitude assessment, story writing, written and pictorial assessments were introduced. Assessments are usually done before and after a programme to get feed back about the success of a programme. Group assessment and individual assessments can be taken depending on the needs of the organizers. The trainees did Brain mapping assessment before and after the programme using tiger, wildlife and bears.

The highlight of this training is that the trainees once get involved in the workshop (that always happen during the ice breaker activities) will be actively involved with the group engaged all the time contributing for a better performance as a group. While contributing for the group they learn a lot about the subject that we talk during the training. They also get a chance to bring out their skills while designing and performing their role by way of making props, skits, songs, poem, drama, drawings, and special characters like poachers, politicians, tribal community, and the animal.

To keep the interest level and their involvement energizers will be conducted at appropriate time. The workshop syllabus has been designed in such a way that in the first two days of the workshop the trainees will have lots of fun, interaction and discussions while the third day will lead through serious issues such as species problems and conservation concern. At the end all the trainees take a pledge by listing two immediate actions that they can do with in the next six month of the training. They also read it aloud so that others can hear.

Learning about an animal is completely different from spreading that information that they learned. Proper plan and dedication is required to achieve this. The trainees as a group, at the later part of the workshop learn how to plan an education programme through group activities. They also learn about various education tools and packets available with ZOO and the ways to use it. ZOO has developed a wide range of education materials on species and issues related to wildlife conservation. All the trainees after the training get a chance to receive all these materials free of cost but on condition that they have to meet the postal expenses and also let the ZOO know about their plans for the education programme. All the trainees are

given a chance to become a member of South Asian Network of International Zoo Educators (SANIZE). As a follow up of the training all the members receive the communications from ZOO office and information related to the availability of education materials and announcements that help them update the latest information with regard to conservation education.

Opinion about the workshop by the trainees...

The following are the opinion by the trainees about INCEST programme.

As an educator I do normal teaching that will include field interpretation, lecture and wildlife movies. Through this training, now I have learnt more techniques, methods and how to teach.

Clubbing serious issues with entertainment in a friendly manner is really touching.

It has inspired me a lot to learn more about the conservation programmes and about the bears. Before attending this I did not have much knowledge about these concepts.

I have also come across various energy booster's which creates extra enthusiasm and very helpful to maintain the interest ...

Drama was very nice. Games were very useful, planning education programme very useful.

The workshop has been very intense and focused. It was meticulously planned; especially the time was managed very well. A wide variety of activities were introduced like skit, debate, role play, games etc.,

Really liked creation of the picture exhibition of the time line on bears; Creation of storyline for Drama was also very nice idea.

The drama was really good and made us to think the critical, current status of the animal and urged that I should do something for them at least tell to few people who I know. The debate was really useful to see the involvement and creativity of the participant in a short period of time.

ZOO/SANIZE has a plan to continue with is INCEST programme since this found to be more useful to wildlife conservation educators. In the future programmes topics related to a variety of wildlife and issue based themes will be covered. We are aiming to organize four INCEST programme in a year. As a follow up of this a refresher course will also be organized inviting selected trained participants who utilize the training tools and show good record in this education programmes. If you are interested to take part in the training and to register your name for the future training programme, please contact the authors.