

Report on Advanced Training in Conservation Education, WCS Conservation Education Fellows Programme, April 13-30, 2007

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Background

For the fifth year, Wildlife Conservation Society organised an International Conservation Education Fellowship Programme at Bronx Zoo, New York. The programme is designed to enhance the capacity of conservation educators through advanced learning training, where the educators have access to WCS's very useful education materials, and get an opportunity to interact their resource persons and staff.

This year a total of seven participants from seven different countries (Bangladesh, Congo, India, Laos, Madagascar, South Africa and Uganda) attended the training programme. The programme gave all the participants an opportunity to participate in all the WCS's on-going activities to learn conservation education teaching skills. The training programme included sessions like: How to make a good presentation, how to organize good education programmes, and how people learn and evaluate programmes. Conservation education initiatives and activities in and around the globe were well explained in the programme.

The participants shared their own work with others; worked on individual projects for implementation in their home countries, and planned future collaborative projects with WCS's Education Division. We visited all the 5 WCS facilities (Central Park Zoo, New York Aquarium, Prospect Park Zoo, Queens Zoo, and Bronx Zoo). Each of these facilities is like an open university. There were other institutions and events as well.

Objectives

The goal of the programme was to enhance capacity as effective conservation educators through fun, interactions, and motivating activities.

Output

By the end of the training, Fellows were able to
1) achieve tools to employ a broad diversity of education and communication techniques;
2) develop skills and confidence to design and implement an educational project in their home setting; and
3) know about more extensive networks of conservation professionals with whom they could collaborate.

Personal review of participation in WCS Program

The most important role of this programme lies in assisting educators from developing countries, to inspire them as educators for a better future of their own people who are very rich in natural resources. Fellows got the opportunities to observe improved and effective Conservation.

We came to know about different active learning methods, and teaching techniques for different age groups. Fellows also got an opportunity to visit different living institutes like aquaria and zoos. Exposure to American social and cultural life was a unique experience to all the participants, which was indeed very warm, helpful and educative. It was well explained how Wildlife Conservation Society is working on conservation education in different parts of the world. Participants had an opportunity to know more about the conservation education potential and problems from the experiences of WCS. Everyone at the WCS Education Department was very resourceful, kind and cooperative.

The education materials, books and manuals which were produced by WCS and different institutes are of great help to all the participants. These have guidelines on how to organize conservation education programmes and improve the present situation prevailing in the home

Implementation of Training Knowledge and future plans

I plan to

1. publish this WCS report in the newspapers;
2. share my training experiences with my colleagues at the university (already shared with WTB colleagues);
3. create awareness among people by producing leaflets, posters, signage, bill boards, etc;
4. organize talks for educators, students and others;
5. organize a workshop titled 'Training Adult Advisers for Teens for Planet Earth in Bangladesh' on June 8, 2007; and
6. to organise long term Conservation Education Programmes.

Conclusion:

I was so delighted to experience the potentials of conservation education at the WCS. It was a need of the time. WCS is full of ideas and I have been given a responsibility to pass their message across the country. Almost all the vertebrate fauna in Bangladesh face some kinds of threats. The future of Bangladesh fauna depends on how best we could make our people aware of the fact that they should conserve it not only for themselves but also for the generations to come.

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