

Workshop on Birds' Nestbox Making **Saptha Girish. M.K***

Birds always have been sighted alongside human habitats for hundreds of years. In fact they have adapted themselves well to human presence. Rapid urbanisation and change in human lifestyles, however, have threatened the survival of these birds. They are left looking for alternative options for roosting and nesting. In an attempt to invite these birds to our gardens and parks by providing artificial nesting sites, our Zoo in association with Mysore based NGO 'Mysore Amateur Naturalists' (MAN) organised a workshop on birds nestbox making for two days on 2-3 June 2005 at the Zoo.

Keeping in mind the need to create awareness in the common man, the workshop was open to the general public. A total of 34 participants from various fields (students, teachers, retired officials, government servants and businessmen) came together to understand the importance of birds in our lives and to give them a chance to survive alongside us.

The programme was informally inaugurated. Sri. Shivanna gave the inaugural speech and introduced us to the resource persons Dr. Subramanya, Scientist, GKVK & naturalist Sri. Manu from MAN.

The session started with Mr. Manu relating the purpose and need for this kind of workshop. Then Dr. Subramanya took over and spoke on the nesting behaviour of birds. With the help of some wonderful slides he explained the birds' criteria for nesting. The reasons he quoted for nesting of birds were reproduction and leaving behind as many young ones of their own during their life time and also, to some extent, roosting. He also explained that a bird's nest should be where it is assured of food supply, safety from predators and suitable climatic conditions.

Then he spoke about the nesting season based on the classification such as river bank nesters, Monsoon nesters, birds of prey, fish feeders and hole nesters. Further, he spoke on the different type of nests the birds build and the evolution of the nests which has been taken over the years. He also discussed about the threat to the birds and their nests by various factors and the probable solution for it. He finally gave some designs for making nests. His talk was very inspiring and interesting to all the participants. After this session a documentary on nesting of birds was shown to give a clear picture to the talk given by Dr. Subramanya.

The afternoon session was an interactive one. Mr. Manu discussed in length regarding the sizes and shapes of nest-boxes to be designed for various birds. He also spoke on the nest building materials which the birds use and the secondary nest users. He also spoke about the brood parasitism quoting some examples. The second day was a field day. In the morning we had a nature walk in the Zoo. The purpose of the walk was to identify some nests. We observed some cup nests and tree-hole nests in the Zoo. The other purpose of the walk was to identify places to put up the nest-boxes. The participants were divided into four groups. They were allowed to choose the bird for which they

would design the nest and prepare a nest box. After finalising these things the participants were given the required tools to make the nests. The rest of the day went in preparation of the nest-boxes and all the participants involved themselves and with great enthusiasm made 13 nest boxes of different design for different type of birds.

One important factor was, the wood used to make nest boxes were from the trees brought down at the Zoo due to various reasons (Hallow trees & old trees). Thus the wood from these trees were used for a good purpose & was put back in the Zoo.

At the end of the day the workshop was concluded with a valedictory function. Sri. Manoj Kumar, Executive Director of the Zoo explained and informed about the importance of Zoos and their role in conservation. He expressed his happiness about the nest boxes designed and said that it was everybody's responsibility to conserve the nature for the future. Some of the participants also shared their feelings about the workshop and said that, they were immensely enlightened by this workshop. Finally Certificates were distributed for the completion of the workshop.

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Indian Zoo News continued ... Bomb hoax at Byculla zoo

Yesterday's serial bomb blasts in London seemed to have inspired a Mumbaikar into calling up the Byculla zoo and informing them that a bomb had been placed in the monkey enclosure. The news sent the zoo authorities in a tizzy, but the information was a hoax. Said zoo superintendent P A Naringrekar, "At 1.45 pm, an anonymous caller claimed there was a bomb in the zoo. Not taking any chances, we tipped off the Byculla police who combed the enclosure for two hours, but found nothing." Naringrekar added that 100- odd people present at the zoo were taken to a safe distance from the enclosure. "But no one panicked," he added. Byculla police authorities said that a bomb disposal squad and a dog squad were immediately summoned to the spot. After two hours of combing, they declared that the scare was a hoax. The crowd was witness to the entire police drill. The monkeys in the enclosure and other animals in the vicinity were not moved during the entire operation. This was a second hoax call in two days. Yesterday evening, Inox Theatre at Marine Lines received a similar bomb hoax at 9 pm. Police sources say that the same person may be making the calls. **by A Mid Day Correspondent, July 8, 2005**