

## See what Just a few posters can do ...

### Bats and Rats

The Bombay Cambridge Gurukul, an educational institute, is located at Andheri (E), Mumbai. Anand Pendharkar (an Environmentalist) during an EVS workshop provided us with a quantity of "Bats 'N Rats' posters. As a part of an EVS project in school the posters were used for a quiz activity for the students of Standard IX (13-14yrs). The poster is printed on both sides, so we used two of them to display them on the flannel board for the students.

The activity required about 60 mins. The school time-table provides only one period (45mins) per week, so the activity had to be spread over two weeks. During the first week, about 15 minutes were utilized for introduction of the topic and for giving the guidelines for the activity which were as follows:

- 1) The posters would be displayed for a week.
- 2) The students should read the matter carefully.
- 3) Each group of students should frame atleast 25 questions related to the topic.
- 4) The questions should be of objective type.
- 5) The activity would be scored by the students, so the students should also remember the answers.
- 6) Students are free to ask questions related to the same topic, other than the matter provided.

Our school has a house system where the students are divided into four houses, so the students were grouped according to their houses. A group leader was appointed to monitor and ensure student participation.

During the second session, the four sets of questions were interchanged among the houses. They were given 15 minutes time to complete the activity. The set of questions were then returned to the house, which prepared it for evaluation. The house, which won, was given points, which were added to their ongoing record of house points.

The students enjoyed the activity as they had an opportunity to frame questions and evaluate themselves. It created awareness of how bats and rats play an important role in nature.

The content is so vivid and interesting that it creates interest in students of all ages. This poster was also used by Mr. Sandesh Kadam as an aid to develop his lesson Balance in Nature, for the students of Std 6 (11-12yrs). His lesson plan for the topic was published in the Garden for Life Newsletter Dec 2004. *Submitted by Ms. Pratibha Kharat, Bombay Cambridge School, Andheri (E), Mumbai <pratibhakharat@hotmail.com>*

#### **Bats help the human race just like Batman !**

On 23rd . November 2004 a Bat Education Programme was organized by Mr. Debanga Mahalia (who runs an organisation with an impossible acronym "Rwdwmsa" — *comment by editor*) in Tangla M.S. School premises. Twenty eight students from 12 different schools and

colleges of this area from class VIII to XII participated in the programme. The main aim was to highlight the importance of bats and to create awareness about the conservation of bats. We advised all the participants to pass on whatever they had learnt to other students they knew during their daily assembly and other times. In this regard we sought the help of the Heads of all 12 institutions.

The day-long programme was conducted by Debanga Mahalia, Director of Rwdwmsa and was inaugurated by Mr. Sarat Das (Principal of the Tangla H.S. School) who wisely commented that "Mankind will be the loser if they do not stop the killing of bats". Afterwards a jolly atmosphere was generated as Mrs. Anima B. Baruah (Head, Dept. of Zoology, Tangla college) and Mrs. Nalni Boro (subject Teacher, Tangla M.S. School) tied ZOO's bat rakhi's to the students wrists. Md. Sariful Hussain (Rtd. Forest officer and member of Rwdwmsa) quoted the Holy Koran Sarif and said, "When Saint Ibrahim was praying to Allah he was engulfed by fire. Then "Ababi" (a bat) tried to save him by pouring water on him carried from the sea". The Koran has a high esteem for bats. Today some people act to eradicate bats.

Prof. Anima B. Baruah (member of Rwdwmsa said, "It will be a great mistake if we think that the world is only for man kind. Extinction of even a small creature from earth will have great effect on our environment. An element of nature is the bat. This element has been offering such valuable contribution to human being that we cannot imagine. Bats have been helping the human race just like BATMAN". Prof. Samarjit Boro (research scholar and co-ordinator of Rwdwmsa) said, "Some people have been taking advantage of the loopholes of law and are freely destroying forests. In the name of development works unwanted and unwarranted forest destruction is going on". CCINSA member Mr. Debanga Mahalia dwelt at length about bats and why we should protect them.

After lunch break Bat packets, Bat & Rat packets, posters, books provided by Zoo Outreach Organization and Rwdwmsa 's Assamese leaflets about bats was handed over to participants, who were given 30 minutes to study all these. The material was translated into Assamese also. Next Mr. Dinesh Singh and Mr. Ajoy Rabha (both members of Rwdwmsa) conducted a quiz and essay writing competition among the participants. Following this 'web of life' game was played among the participants by Dr. Anil Borah (Organizing Secretary, Rwdwmsa). With the vote of thanks delivered by Mr. Biswajit Deka (Office Secretary, Rwdwmsa) the day long encouraging and fruitful Bat Education programme was concluded. *Submitted by Debanga Mahalia, Rwdwmsa, Ward no. 2, Tangla 784521, Assam, India, Email: debanga\_mahalia@yahoo.co.in*

#### **Bats 'N Rats Activity - Report of TCS Maitree Sanctuary Conservation Childrens Summer Camp**

As part of the TCS Maitree Sanctuary Conservation Initiative, a children's camp was organised at the TCS office at Banyan Park, Andheri. Sanctuary Asia conducted nature related activities for the children every day of the camp. The camp was held from 16th May 2005 to 20th May 2005 with fifty-four kids ranging from 4 - 13 years attended the camp.

Activities ranged from nature trails to art and craft with a yoga session daily. The kids also potted saplings of various plants like *hibiscus* and *byrophyllum* and were responsible for watering their plant everyday. They also learnt to make pug-marks using Plaster of Paris. The children were taken to CEC (Conservation Education Centre) at Goregaon and taken into the forest for a nature trail where they learned about flora and fauna and the importance of Sanjay Gandhi National Park to a city like Mumbai. The children were shown a short documentary film by David Attenborough followed by a wildlife quiz based on all they had learnt at the camp. There was a fancy dress competition with themes of animals, fruits and vegetables. The camp also included a one-day theatre workshop at the end of which the children performed short skits with a wildlife theme.

**Bat Camp** — A bat workshop was also conducted at the camp. The session commenced with a 30 minute interactive powerpoint presentation on bats where the children learnt about their physical characteristics, habitat, food and importance. Interesting facts were told to the children about bats for e.g., the little Brown can eat up to 1,200 insects in one hour and how bats live on all continents except Antarctica! Myths and tales about bats were discussed and many misconceptions that the children had about bats were cleared. The slide show ended with a short question-answer session.

**Distribution of Bat Kits** - After the slide show Bats n Rats kits were distributed. The children read through the information with wildlife biologist Ms. Supriya Jhunjunwala which led to a detailed interactive discussion about the information contained within. There was an activity session during which the game at the back of the A3 poster of a cave bat was used and the children eagerly wore the bat and rat masks provided in the kit. The children were instructed to tie the rachis provided in the kits to their parents at home. **Visit to Bat Colony** — This was followed by a short visit to the bat colony at the Banyan Park where they viewed the habitat and mannerisms of the bats from close proximity.

**T-shirt Painting Competition** — The session concluded with a poster painting competition where the children were given T-shirts with a bat outline to paint. This was a competition where there were six winners-three in the junior category (ages 4 to 7) and three in the senior category (ages 7 to 13). The winners were felicitated on the last day of the camp during the prize distribution ceremony. **Submitted by Karen Menezes, Sanctuary Asia, 602, Maker Chambers V, Nariman Point, Mumbai 400 021, Email: <mail@sanctuaryasia.com>**

### **Education and documentation in Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary**

In the month of July 2004, we visited Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary to document bat fauna in and around the Wildlife Sanctuary. During the course of our stay there we conducted an education programme targeted to the children of class VII-IX of the Government Boys School Jannaram. We had taken along with us 25 education packets for this purpose. Mr. G. Ravinder, the Forest Range Officer, Jannaram introduced us to the children and our education programme took off. We started by explaining what are

bats, the major kinds of bats, the usefulness of bats. We made the children wear the masks provided in the packets and explained to them about the two major kinds of bats, their food and feeding habits, the variations in their sizes. The usefulness of both the frugivorous and insectivorous bats in relation to their feeding habits was explained to them in detail and their queries answered. Many superstitions and myths regarding bats were discussed and were given a scientific explanation. To explain the food and feeding habits of insectivorous bats a game called 'bat-and-prey' was played using younger boys as the prey and the elder ones as the bats. This game was thoroughly enjoyed by the children. As time was the limiting factor we conducted the rakhi tying ceremony with a pledge to understand and protect the bats.

2. In the month of December 2004, we had been to Kurnool district to conduct surveys for the presence of bats in the district. During the course of our surveys we went to a village hamlet enquiring about the presence of bats in that area. Hearing about our studies on bats the headmaster of the local school invited us to speak about the bats to his students. We went on to explain about bats in general what and how much they eat and how useful they are, where they stay and other general information about bats, and scientific explanations were given such that the myths and superstitions about bats were quelled. Later about 10 education packets were distributed among the students and about 5 packets were given to the teachers. The children were made to wear their masks and later rakhi tying ceremony was conducted. The teachers were then told to read out and explain to the students about the contents of the packets such that the children and their elders would respect and protect the bats. **Submitted by Dr. C. Srinivasulu and Dr. Bhargavi Srinivasulu. "Aditya's", 66/1 Vanitha Housing Society, Near Suryatemple, Opp. Aruna Enclave, Thirumalgheery, Secunderabad 500 015 Andhra Pradesh, Email: hyd2\_masawa@sancharnet.in**

## **Herptiles**

### **Workshops to Help Herps: Freshwater Turtle, Tortoises, Terrapins and Gharial**

**Turtles and Tortoises:** On the eve of Wildlife Week Celebration 2004, a one-day workshop on the "Role of Reptiles in the Ecosystem" was conducted to Chennai Corporation Middle School Teachers on 14 October 2004. In this workshop 22 teachers participated.

A second one-day workshop was conducted on 21 October 2004, in which 19 middle school teachers from Chennai Corporation participated. During the workshop hands on training was given to the participants in "identification of turtles and tortoise, its role in the ecosystem and conservation". In addition lectures were delivered on Reptiles of India, Role of reptiles in the ecosystem, identification of common venomous snakes, first aid and treatment, false beliefs about snakes with slide show.

**Gharial:** A one-day workshop was conducted on Helping Herps: "Go Gharial! Go back to Survival" to the Forest officials of Tamil Nadu Forest Department on 5 November 2004. In this workshop 13 officials participated. During the

workshop lectures were given on history of crocodile conservation in India, Reptiles of India, Role of reptiles in the ecosystem, identification of common venomous snakes, first aid and treatment, false beliefs about snakes.

During the workshops following resource materials were given to the participants:  
Common Snakes of Chennai City,  
Four Common Venomous Snakes of India,  
Booklet on *Snakes and Other Reptiles*,  
Helping Herps: Freshwater turtles, tortoises and terrapins,  
Helping Herps: Go Gharial! Go back to Survival.  
**Submitted by Dr. V. Kalaiarasan, Director, Chennai Snake Park Trust, Rajbhavan Post, Chennai-600 022, Email: cspt1972@md5.vsnl.net.in**

### Helping Herptiles at Madras Crocodile Bank Trust Summer Camps 2005

A total of seven summer camps were held in the months of April and May 2004. Four camps were for children who registered with Croc Bank, a two-day camp was conducted for the children of Tata Indicom employees, a day camp for village children and an overnight camp for under privileged students from Nalamdana Foundation.

**April 16 – 17, 2005:** A two-day camp was conducted for 18 children of ages 6 – 15 years. The summer camp had an exciting start as the spectacled caimans were being transferred back to their pit near the beach and the children helped in transferring and releasing them. The campers were taken on a nature walk and snake hunt in the fields and reservoir area surrounding Andikuppam village in Chengelpet District with Irulas. The Irulas found four rat snakes and one cobra. The National Geographic movie - Snake Wranglers - on Romulus Whitaker's experiences with the Irulas was shown to the campers on their return to Croc Bank. Activities were conducted with the Amphibian kit and the Go Gharial kit. Campers read from the information booklet of both the kits, enthusiastically tied rakhies, donned masks and differentiated between the different crocodile species of India.

**April 22 – 24, 2005:** A three-day camp was held for 9 students. The snake hunt and nature walk was held outside the ITWWS campus at Thandarai, Chingelpet on the bund of the reservoir. Three rat snakes and one cobra were found. All other activities were conducted as per schedule.

**April 30, 2005:** A day camp was held for toddlers and mothers. The kids spent some time colouring frogs in the activity booklet of ZOO's Amphibian kit.

**May 10 –11, 2005:** A two day camp was held for 19 children. Tata Indicom coordinated this camp for their employee's children. The snake hunt was with the Irulas near Poonjeri.

**May 15, 2005:** A day camp was held for village kids. Blodsow, an artist from Cholamandal has been doing a series of workshops with 15 children from a fishing hamlet in Injambakkam.

**May 20 - 21, 2005:** An overnight camp for 15 students coordinated by Nalamdana Foundation, an organisation

that helps children from lower socio-economic groups with textbooks, school uniforms and fees. This year they wanted to introduce them to nature with a camp at the Croc Bank. The program for this group was from 5pm on May 20, 2005 till 12pm in the afternoon on May 21, 2005. A tour around Croc Bank, Night Safari, snake hunt and a puppet theatre workshop was also conducted. **Submitted by Kundhavi Devi, Edn Officer, Madras Croc Bank Trust, Chennai**

## Plants

### Plants for Life At Agumbe

What more wonderful topic than "Trees" to kick start the celebration of World Environment day at Agumbe. The first of its kind was introduced at the local government school targeting the students of VIIIth Standard. The program was organized on the 10th of June instead of the 5th as it was a Sunday, however this did not hamper their spirits. The students were briefed about the importance of World Environment day, and were explained about plants, trees and forests. Everyone received the "Plants for life" packets, which they curiously but obediently unwrapped to find interesting props, as they did, their curiosity was quenched while listening attentively to the explanation offered about these props. Posters were put up in classrooms and pasting the same on available logs and poles created a model forest.

"Plants for life — a celebration" booklet was read out and explained in both English as well as in Kannada. The students were very happy to tie Rakhi to each other as they pledged to protect the trees. They were all the more excited when BGCI and Chester Zoo were introduced to them.

I extend a hearty thanks to ZOO, for providing such wonderful, and innovative materials. This enabled us to sow in the seeds of environmental education at the schools in Agumbe in the most interesting and promising way. Thank you once again for helping in making this program a grand success. **Submitted by P. Gowri Shankar, Researcher / EEO, Agumbe Rainforest Research station, Agumbe, Thirthahalli Thaluk, Shimoga, Karnataka, India - 577411. Ph. no 09448156804**

