

Madras Crocodile Bank Trust - Environment Education Programme February to December 2002 - Report

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A Report of the environment education programmes conducted by Madras Crocodile Bank Trust from February to December 2002 is as follows:

Purchase of equipment

A television, VCR, overhead slide projector, printers, and a camera have been purchased to facilitate audio-visual sessions and documentation of the Environment Education programmes for schools.

Translation

The translation of "Croc Talk", the children's booklet, has been completed for Kannada and Telugu and production of these should be ready by March 2003.

Croc Bank package for school children

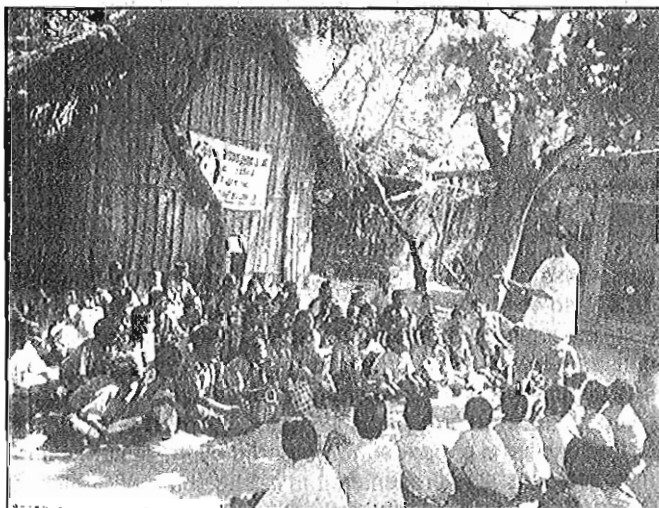
As part of the Croc Bank package, stickers and badges have been produced and were distributed to school children during the programmes after launching the nature clubs in schools.

Nature Club Inauguration

Over 20 schools have been visited and programmes have been conducted with regular follow-ups. Mr. P. Gowri Shankar, the Environment Education Officer inaugurated the Nature Clubs at the Government Primary, Middle and High Schools on the East Coast Road and Old Mahabalipuram Road. During the inaugurations EO spoke about the role of MCBT, its activities and future programmes for each club. Slide shows on reptiles were presented. Information on wildlife in general and snakes in particular was presented to the students. About 3000 students attended the programme in all. As a result of the above programme, 20 nature clubs were inaugurated covering a total of 1000 students. MCBT badges and stickers were also distributed to all the members.

Ongoing Nature Club Activities

The nature club activities commenced in the month of June after the inauguration of the clubs in February 2002. On all Sundays, programmes have been conducted for school children from the Croc Bank village. On an average 30-40 students attend each session.



Educational officer teaching children about the environment

The Sunday morning activities for these members include screening of slide / video films, followed by discussions. The students were allowed to ask questions related to the different aspect of natural history, behavior of wild animals and their role in ecosystems. Besides these, the members also visit different enclosures of the park for observations and suggest changes that can be made. These nature club members guide the tourists and inform them about the role of MCBT in the conservation of reptiles. The students also make sure that the tourists do not tease the animals in the enclosures.

The afternoon sessions were mostly creative sessions using puppets. These members devised stories and themes on different environmental issues including the role of reptiles in our environment and the need for conservation. Different puppets were used for the stories. They performed different puppet plays for various groups participating in workshops and camps at MCBT. This activity helped to develop individual skills as well as created awareness. The Education officer, the Librarian and the Education Coordinator conduct the Sunday programmes.

Nature Workshops

A number of Nature workshops were organized at the Eco-study centre. The activities of the workshop included slide show on "Neighborhood biodiversity," a visit around the Croc Bank, nature games, quiz, puppet theater activities, handling sessions with snakes, turtles, tortoises and baby crocodiles. Besides creative sessions using locally available resource materials were also organized. A total of 17 workshops were conducted for 561 school students, children and youth from surrounding villages, city schools and from the fishing community.

Palm Leaf Craft - 4 June 2002

To train the education staff on the local crafts, a one-day workshop on palm leaf craft was organized. A resource person was invited from the local village to demonstrate weaving of different local objects and toys. Various models of animals, *thoranas*, toys, baskets were prepared. Ten participants including MCBT staff, schoolteachers, children and volunteers attended the workshop.

Teachers Training Workshop - 11 September, 2002

A one-day Teachers Training Workshop was conducted to create awareness about general environment as well as the role of reptiles in nature among the local schoolteachers. As part of the workshop, an illustrated talk on 'Neighborhood biodiversity', a field visit around the park, slide shows, a demonstration session on nature games like "Web of life", "Memory game", "Who am I?", besides a creative session on preparation of low cost teaching aids. A wildlife welfare teacher training programme kit prepared by Zoo Outreach Organization, India was distributed to the participants. The teachers were also taught on how to explain and communicate on the values of kindness to animals among

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school children in their daily life.

In order to use innovative communication techniques the teachers were taken to the Croc Bank's puppet theatre and some of the teachers were encouraged to prepare stories and themes on environment and related topics. These stories and themes were enacted using glove and rod puppets. The teachers also gave a presentation on the use of the workshop input in their regular curriculum for their schools. The workshop concluded with an interactive session using a live juvenile crocodile. Participation certificates were distributed to all the 32 teachers from 17 Panchayat Union Elementary Schools.

Nature camps

Several three-day nature camps have been organized for various groups from Chennai:

A three-days camp was conducted at the MCBT premises, between 5 & 7 April for the students from Symbiosis Institute of Mass Communication, Pune. As part of the programme an illustrated talk on Indian wildlife, special talks on wildlife photography and filming in the wild, slide / video shows, field trips to the nearby wilderness area, project work and creative sessions were conducted for the participants. Eight students and one staff participated in the camp. The Education Officer conducted the camp with inputs from the E.E. Coordinator and various other resource persons.



Teacher Training Programme

A three-day camp was conducted at MCBT from 9-11 May for 14 students from various Chennai city schools on 'neighborhood Biodiversity'. As part of the camp the participants were taken to the Irula Tribal Womens Welfare Society, a tour of the medicinal plant garden and a trek to the nearby scrub forest. The other activities included a tree planting session, nature games, slide/video shows, quiz, discussions, creative session, interactive sessions with live reptiles, a session on star gazing was also conducted.

A 3-day camp was conducted for 19 students and 3 teachers from the Kodaikanal International School, Kodaikanal from 2 to 4 October. The activities of the camp included slide / video shows, lecture and interactive sessions with the subject experts, project work, nature trails, field visit around the Croc Bank and puppet theatre session. The participants were given certificates.

A two-day camp was conducted similarly from 10 to 11 Oct for a group of 12 students in the age group 8 - 12 from different city schools.

A one-day overnight camp was conducted for 9 members of the Madras Naturalists Society, an NGO based in Chennai on 23 November. As part of the camp, bird watching sessions, nature trail inside the park in the night, interactive session on reptiles and a puppet show by the members of the Nature club was conducted.

Slide shows

Slide shows were conducted in 19 rural schools on various topics related to nature and wildlife with specific reference to reptiles and their role in nature. A total of 2757 students have attended these slide shows.

Mobile exhibition: Sea Turtle awareness programme

In order to generate awareness on the endangered sea turtles of India, a series of awareness programmes were conducted for the various fishing villages along the East Coast Road north and south of MCBT. A van with mounted posters on sea turtles, prepared by the Education officer was taken around the various villages. The programme started with an introduction, followed by a talk on Sea turtles and the role of villagers in protecting the endangered species, which visit the east coast during the nesting season. The village children enthusiastically attended the talks and asked questions pertaining to the sea turtles. Most village people welcomed the awareness programme and in some villages the organizers were helped by the village heads to spread the message of turtle conservation in their neighborhood. Around 8000 people from 19 villages attended these awareness programmes.

Puppet theatre

As part of Croc Bank's ongoing programme, a multi-puppet theater, the first of its kind in India in a Nature park has been constructed. The Croc Bank is using this traditional unique art form as an environmental education tool and in the process reviving an old dying traditional performing art form. Shadow, glove and rod puppets are being used in the theatre. The theatre is used by students and teachers to promote environmental awareness. The theatre and the programmes are supported by MCBT.

Other activities

Field Trip – Arignar Anna Zoo Visit ; 6 October 2002.

The Nature club members were taken to the Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Vandalur on a field trip. The biologist of the park interacted with the members as well as conducted a slide show on the role of zoos and the natural history of the animals. 30 members participated in the field trip.

Wildlife Week Celebrations - 17 – 23 October, 2002

The wildlife week is observed from 1 to 8 October every year by various organizations around the country to create awareness about Indian wildlife. The Madras Crocodile Bank Trust also conducted a series of activities in the form of painting competition, craft from waste, video shows, games, quiz and an essay writing competition. 400 nature club members participated in the programmes. The winners were given prizes at a formal function held on 27 October. As part of the function a puppet show prepared by the Nature club members was also presented.

Tree Planting Rally

Padur, a village about 9 km south of MCBT was recently included in the EE Ford India project. A tree planting rally was conducted on the 30 November with the enthusiastic support of the village Youth Club. Over 300 students from the Panchayat Union Welfare School, Youth Welfare Association, Padur, and the Hindusthan Engineering College

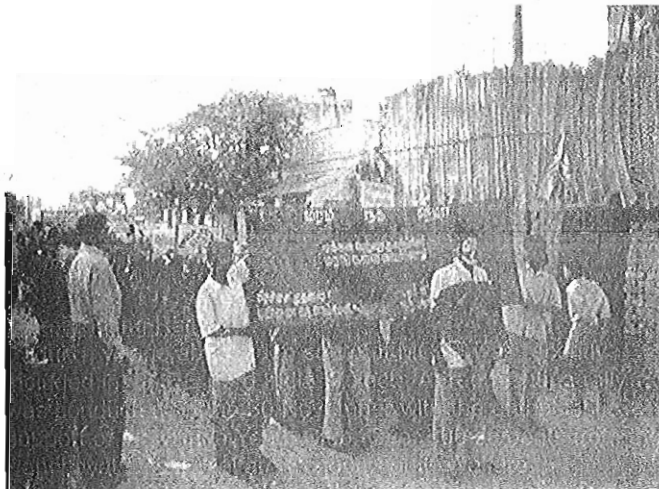


Wildlife Week celebrations

participated in the rally.

Tree planting programme

As a follow-up of the tree planting rally held in November 2002, a tree planting session was conducted. About 100 saplings were planted in ward No 1 of the village. Students from Adi-Dravidar Welfare Middle School, Hindusthan Engineering College and Youth Welfare Association, Padur attended the programme and were asked to maintain the saplings. The saplings were donated by the Irula Tribal



Tree planting rally with students at Padur

Women's Welfare Association, Thandarai.

Turtle Walk

To gain practical field knowledge and to understand the role of sea turtle nesting behavior and conservation, a series of camps were conducted. As part of the camp, students were taken on turtle walks along the beaches for at least 4 km, and they were briefed about the sea-turtle life history, nesting biology, threats and conservation strategies. A total of 24

students participated in the turtle walks.

Visit to Alternate Energy Units, Pondicherry

The Education Coordinator along with the MCBT Trustee, Mr. G. Dattatri made a one-day visit to Auroville, Pondicherry to explore possibilities of setting up some working models of alternate energy units at MCBT premises to create awareness. They visited wind and solar energy installations at Auroville, Pondicherry.

Results of internal evaluation, planning and workshops

Weekly meetings are held between the Director, the Education Coordinator, the Projects Coordinator, the Education Officer and the Administrative Officer. All programmes, camps and workshops are discussed in detail and evaluated.

Networking and joint programmes have been conducted with World Wide Fund for Nature - India, Trust for Environment Education (TREE), Rotary Club of Down Town, Madras Naturalist Society, Irula Tribal Women's Welfare Society and Irula Snake Catcher's Co-operative Society.

CEE Workshop: Ahmedabad, 19 – 23 August 2002

The Education Officer attended a workshop on 'Preparing self-learning material for EE' conducted by Centre for Environment Education, Ahmedabad. Activities of the workshop included a curriculum design for distance environment education, concept mapping, learning activities and course delivery aspects. 24 participants representing various NGOs as well as the Education Department personnel from the Govt. of India participated in the workshop.

Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar Zoo ; Mysore, 27 August 02

The Education Coordinator conducted a session on 'Communication through the Art of Puppetry for Zoo Education' as part of the Zoo volunteers training programme organized by the Mysore Zoo and the Centre for Environment Education, Ahmedabad. As part of the session, simple puppet-making demonstrations were conducted and followed by preparation and presentation by the participants in the form of a show. The Education Officer presented a talk on role of zoo volunteers and their interaction with the public. 20 participants from local schools, zoo volunteers and NGO field staff attended this workshop.

Continued programmes and visits to village schools, organizing camps and workshops at the MCBT.

Acknowledgements

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Resource persons :-

Romulus Whitaker, Shekar Dattatri, Preston Ahimaz, Saravana Kumar, Vena Kapoor, Supraja Dharani, Smitha, Maryline Dujeantieu, Bandana Aul, M. Sridhar, and D. Parasuraman and the MCBT staff.

Organizations: -

Trust for Environment Education, Irula Tribal Women's Welfare Society, Irula Snake Catcher's Co-operative Society, Rotary Club of Down Town, Zoo Outreach Organization, WWF- Chennai, AEEO, CEO, DEO and to all the Head Masters and Head Mistress of the Panchayat Union Welfare, Middle and High School, Kanchipuram district who actively participated in the programmes.