

BNHS Mumbai conducts WL Education Camps at Conservation Ed Centre

Amit Chavan

Note : Amit Chavan was a participant in the Teachers for Tigers training workshops organised by ZOO and WCS with funding from Starr Foundation and US Fish and Wildlife Service. Amit recently coordinated a series of Wildlife Exploration Camps using the Teachers for Tigers Manual and How Nature Works book. Some of the activities are reviewed and illustrated in this report.

Camp: Wildlife Exploration Camp, at Conservation Education Centre, BNHS, Goregaon
Dates : 1-5 June 2003, Main Theme: Wild Mumbai (Forest, Mangrove, Shoreline Habitat)

Activities on June 1, 2003

Concept Mapping: On the first day after Introduction, the participants were asked to put down everything whatever they knew about the main theme "Wild Mumbai". The same charts were given to the participants on the last day and they found that the entire chart paper was not sufficient for their lists.

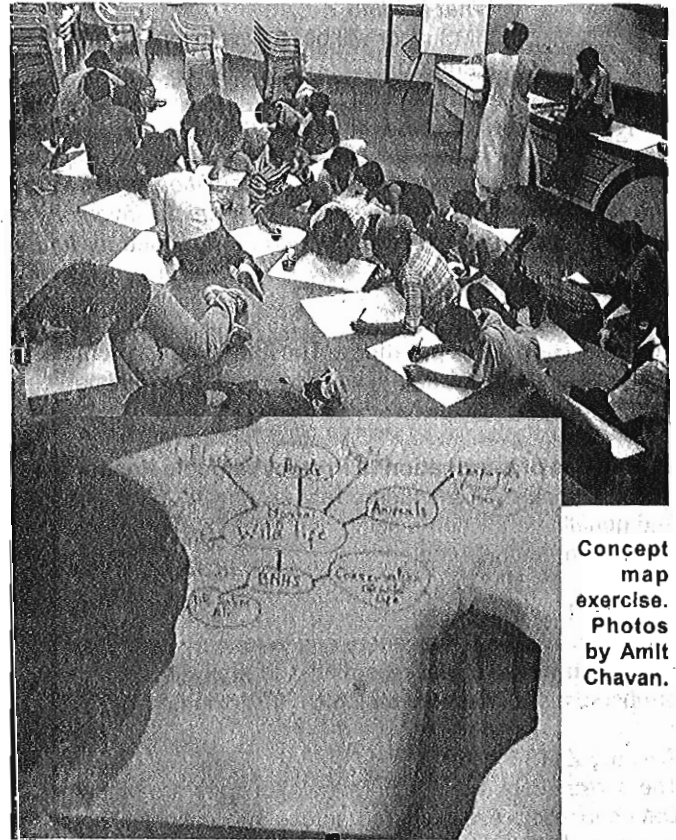
Comments: The activity turned out to be very good, result oriented as it shows the results immediately, not only to the instructors but also to the participants themselves.

How Nature Works: Elements of Survival : The students were divided in smaller groups and each of the groups was assigned a living thing. The groups selected some of the natural elements required for the assigned living creature from the list of physical, biological elements displayed on the board. The groups were asked to make a list of both required as well as not required elements. Each group was led by one representative who justified the groups' decisions when questioned by other groups. There was a wonderful discussion among these 10-15 years old young scientists; who were trying to dictate requirements for the animals other than human. **Addition to the exercise :** The groups were then asked to list the elements for their own (human) survival and all of them pounced on all the elements immediately. At this time they were given to understand how selfish man is and also that we have no right to decide for the animals' needs. They were given an introduction of the concept of habitat and how creatures are adapted for their habitat. Participants understood the importance of each and every element in all the habitats for the survival of the creatures living in the habitat.

Comment: The activity is very good to induce a discussion among the participants, but it should also be moderated by one of the instructors, so that there won't be any fights for the natural elements among the living creatures (participants). Because of all these things the participants understand many more concepts as they experience themselves how difficult it is to find and obtain these elements.

Definitions: In continuation to the discussion on Habitats, Ecology, Adaptations the participants were made to read and understand the definitions.

Adept adaptation: Finger Challenge: Participants were asked to find partners and sit facing each other. All the pairs were given small stones/marbles/seeds. They were asked to refer to the Finger Challenge. Work sheet in their activity



Concept map exercise. Photos by Amit Chavan.

booklet. On this worksheet participants wrote all the possible finger combinations and selected 3 out of it. They were asked to count the successful passes within one minute. Referring to all the results a graph was plotted. A discussion revealed the importance of adaptation in an animals' life.

Comment: Very good activity to experience and understand the significance of any adaptation in an animal's life.

Addition: Just to demonstrate how human is dependent on his eyesight (an adaptation), one of the participants was asked to travel five times on stage from one end to the other. He was asked to cover the same distance only once but with closed eyes. His movements revealed other participants what is the meaning of 'GOING BLIND'. It helped participants to better understand creatures which have developed adaptations for a particular habitat. It aids understanding of why we should not destroy or replace that habitat without thinking.

These activities were conducted on the first day and helped in orienting the participants towards various concepts of 'How Nature Works'.

Food web scramble: Each group of the participants was provided with a food web scramble sheet, which they solved and learnt various terms used in Ecology.

Addition: Oh deer nature game: Once they had understood the terminology, they were assigned the jobs of Herbivores, Carnivores etc. Some of them played role of elements like

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water, shelter etc. In the first round the deers had to find for food, water, shelter. In the second round when tigers were added to the ecosystem, tigers would catch deer who were searching for food, water, shelter. With few more rounds it was demonstrated how nature balances the population of each living creature. In the last round when human was introduced the ecosystem lost its balance, and participants understood the concept of food chain, food web and its balance.

Food web: Now with the proper background of food web, they were given chart papers and photocopies of the food web and elements. The students learnt the role of each elements by the text at the back of each element, and prepared wonderful charts to show the food web.

Addition: Instead of asking participants to only write down names and complete food web, they enjoyed learning food web by drawing, painting, cutting and pasting.

Comment: It turned out to be a very good activity with this alteration.

Census techniques: The participants visited core areas of the Sanjay National Park and could observe wild life in its natural surroundings. They were given information on the Census techniques with the help of the displays in the Tiger Orientation Centre and also the Tiger Manual.

Stalking: The participants were divided in groups such as deers and tigers. The tigers were asked to kill the deers very patiently.

Addition: In the first round the deers were allowed to look behind for tigers only 5 times (a deer cannot see sixth time). One of the 3 tigers could catch one deer successfully. In the next round there was no limitation on the deers to see for the tigers and there was limitation on tigers that they should catch a deer within one minute. Non of the tiger could catch a single deer, and all the tigers growled at instructors why there should be these restriction on tigers. At this juncture they were given to understand that in nature tigers cannot tell deers that do not look here. The entire discussion made the game very enjoyable and informative also.

Comment: Children enjoyed this game a lot.

The last day of the camp was June 5 (World Environment Day) which was decided to be dedicated to our National Animal TIGER. Participants prepared an exhibition named 'Tiger Time line' to celebrate World Environment Day.

Tiger Time Line: 30 events from the tiger time line list in the manual were selected and each of them was cut and pasted on different cards. These cards were distributed among the participants. They were also provided with chart papers and sketch pens. They were asked to interpret the message on the card and show in the language of pictures. Reference material such as photocopies of Tiger range maps etc. were provided to them.

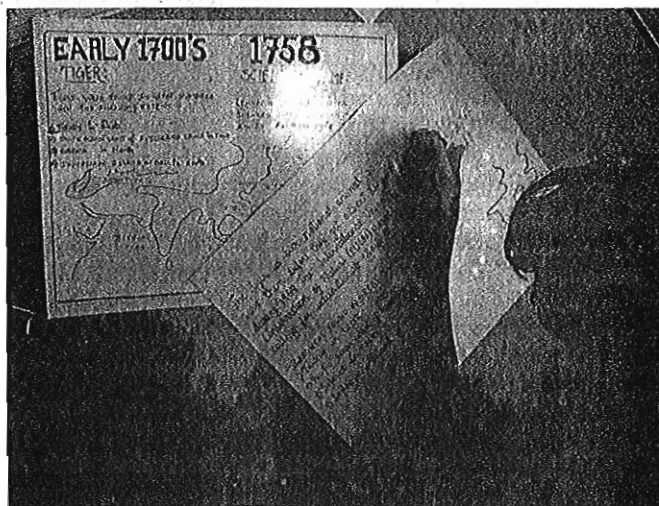
Comment: Participants designed a wonderful Exhibition which told the story of the TIGER right from the 1700's to 2003. It was wonderful to see the skills of children. All the parents who had come to take their wards home were asked to visit the exhibition. One of the mothers burst out crying when she saw the feelings her 8 year old son had developed for tiger and its conservation. He was the youngest participant and he did best to his level.

In all, the participants enjoyed the activities very much.

Membership Camp: BNHS had organized a camp for its members in the Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary. About 25 members enjoyed the eye opener 'elements of survival' as well as Finger Challenge. The activities worked as well with the adults as with kids.

Nisarga Shodh: Nehru Centre, Worli organizes Nisarga Shodh Workshop, in which 60 students from different age groups are invited. It is a full day workshop in which students are oriented towards nature conservation, in the last 3 workshops we opened the workshop with "Elements of Survival" which clarified many concepts and then proceeded to next activities. The feedback (about these 3 workshops) from students, teachers and the organizers was excellent.

Internal BNHS CEC workshop: I conducted many of the activities in the Internal workshop held for the CEC staff, in which my colleagues were explained the same activities so that they also conduct the activities in the events designed by them.



Tiger Time line. Photo by Amit Chavan



Pugmarks. Photo by Amit Chavan