



WWF® for a living planet

November - December 2006

Mruthika

News Letter of WWF - India, Kerala State Office, Thiruvananthapuram 695 035

FROM THE STATE DIRECTOR'S DESK

As we near the end of the year and look back at our achievements as an organization, we feel proud that we have been able to do much in various aspects like initiatives for conservation of specific species and habitat, involve in issues of concern like the proposed Athirapally HEP, Olive Ridley Turtle conservation etc. But on the other side, this also shows that species and habitats are being degraded beyond limit mainly due to anthropogenic activities and this is going to be on the rise in the coming years also as human population expands, our consumeristic life styles take up the natural resources in an unsustainable manner and environmental problems like global warming, climate change, natural disasters etc. increase. Hence in the coming year and further on our work is only going to increase. We expect each and every individual to be responsible citizen and as the constitution says, take the responsibility to protect and conserve our natural resources, so that our planet remains a living one for the present generation and for the ones to come in future. So as we enter a new year and take new resolutions, let us give priority to have a change in our attitudes and lifestyles to include the concept of sustainability as someone has said "Satisfaction is not attained through achieving higher needs, but from fewer wants". Each of us should take efforts to improve our nature and the environment around us. Age, literacy, language, geography, gender or caste should not act as a barrier to this. As mankind we should come together to give in return for all that Mother Earth has provided to us in the last many years since the start of human civilization, and even before that to all plants and animals which inhabited this planet. So let us all join hands and strive to keep this a living planet.

Renjan Mathew Varghese, State Director

IMPORTANT NEWS ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE

GLOBAL

- **Famine threat to tropical seas as warming quickens**

Global warming is creating an ocean famine in swaths of tropical and sub-tropical seas, according to research using nearly a decade of satellite data. The finding, which has long been predicted by computer models, suggests that as warming continues, fish stocks in tropical and sub-tropical regions will drop significantly. The study showed that in some ocean regions, phytoplanktons respond to rising temperatures by scaling down their productivity by 30 percent or more. With less production at the bottom of the food chain, fish and other large ocean creatures have less to eat. Commenting on the study in the journal *Nature*, Scott Doney of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts said that if the trends observed in the satellite observations continued "the future suggests that marine biological productivity in the tropics and mid-latitudes will decline substantially". (*The Hindu daily* 8.12.2006)

- **Global warming, species extinction**

Animal and plant species have begun dying off or changing sooner than predicted because of global warming, a review of hundreds of research studies contends. These fast moving adaptations come as a surprise even to biologists and ecologists because they are occurring so rapidly.

At least 70 species of frogs, mostly mountain-dwellers that had nowhere to go to escape the creeping heat, have gone extinct because of climate change, the analysis says. It also reports that between 100 and 200 other cold-dependent animal species, such as penguins and polar bears are in deep trouble. "We are finally seeing species going extinct", said Unvisersity of Texas biologist Camille Parmesan,

author of the study. "Now we have got the evidence. The most noticeable changes in plants and animals have to do with earlier springs" She said. (*The Hindu daily* 30.11.2007)

- **Green house gas hit record high levels in 2005: UN**

The global average for carbon dioxide in the atmosphere hit a record level in 2005, according to a UN weather agency report. The average level of CO₂ in 2005 was 379.1 ppm, up from 377.1 ppm in 2004, the World Meteorological Organisation said. The global average for nitrous oxide also hit a record level at 319.2 parts per billion in 2005, up from 318.6 in the previous year. (*Business line* 05.11.2006)

- **Warming seas drive shoreline species North**

Climate change has forced seashore creatures around Britain to relocate with warming seas pushing many species of barnacles, snails and limpets north in search of cooler areas of coast, according to a new study.

"Climate change is having a big impact on British shorelines" said Nova Mieszkowska of the Marine Biology Association, who led the four year MarClim project to track the distribution of 57 species in more than 400 sites around the U.K.

By comparing their new data with 1950s records from the same areas, researchers found that some marine species adapted to cold water were migrating away from warming seas and were moving faster than their terrestrial counterparts. They include toothed and flat top shells, acorn barnacles, china limpets and small periwinkles. Some cold water species such as the tortoise shell limpet have almost disappeared from Britain's shores.

Increased global temperature has also confused birds this winter. Robins, thrushes and ducks that would normally fly south from Scandinavia have only been turning up in Britain in December - long after snow usually drives them south.

The average temperature of the Earth increased by 0.7°C in the 20th century. Globally, nine out of the 10 warmest years on record were between 1990 and 2000, and 2006 looks likely to be the warmest in Britain since records began. (*The Hindu daily* 21.12.2006)

NATIONAL

- **Aerobic paddy: Less water, more yield**

At the time when the Government is concerned about the problems of dry land farming and giving

much emphasis on saving rain water particularly for dry regions in the State, aerobic method of paddy cultivation can come as a relief to farmers. This crop cultivation is effective in rain fed areas in the State of Karnataka, as it requires 50% less water than conventional method and is eco friendly. Prof.H.E.Sasidhar and his team of Genetic and Plant Breeding Department of University of Agricultural Sciences had developed this method by incorporating desirable root morphological traits into high yielding genetic make – up. (*The New Indian Express* 27.11.2006)

- **Rare freshwater bryozoans found**

Professors of Govindram Seksharia Science College, Belgaum found a rarest freshwater hydra which was dwelling on Earth 600 million years ago. Bryozoans, a minor phyla of invertebrates was early recorded only three times, two in USA and one in Europe. It is very surprising that they come rarely across fresh water coelenterates. Prof.S.Y.Prabhu told that this is the first time in India, such rare hydra has been discovered in fresh water. (*The New Indian Express* 11.12.2006)

STATE

- **Malayalam version of Hortus Malabaricus**

The Univeristy of Kerala is brining out a Malayalam version of *Hortus Malabaricus*, 325-year-old Latin treatise on the plant wealth of Asia and the tropics, with special reference to the Malabar Coast. The book will be published in 12 volumes spanning 350 pages. The University plans to release the volumes next year. University sources said the translation of the treatise into Malayalam was complete and the editing work was on. The english translation of Hortus Malabaricus, which was brought out by the University earlier, contains modern nomenclature and botanical interpretations of the rich and varied plant wealth of the region. (*The Hindu daily* 8.12.2006)

- **Improve growth inside the forest**

Translocation of the leopard trapped by local people is not a remedy, experts who attended a workshop on "Threatened wildlife of Wynad", has said. The workshop was organized by the Hume Centre for Ecology and Wildlife Biology.

Printed and published by World Wide Fund for Nature - India, Kerala State Office, MRA102, Kamalalayam, C.O. Madhavan Road, Vanchiyoor P.O., Thiruvananthapuram - 35, Phone: 0471-2302265, E-mail: wwf_klso@sancharnet.in

The first priority should be to improve the growth inside the forest so that sufficient prey population was available in the forest itself, they said. This would prevent wild animals coming out of the forest. Also, detailed studies should be conducted in the habitat of leopards to identify territory, number of leopards, feeding habits, etc. This would help to take appropriate action to reduce the conflicts. (*The Hindu daily* 19.11.06)

- **Union Ministry warns Kerala as Earth Quake prone**

Mr. K.P.Rajendran, Revenue Minister for Kerala stated in the assembly that Centre has given enough warning as Kerala becoming earth quake prone. He added that there should be a control on the illegal quarrying, sand mining and construction of huge buildings etc. Though scientists are soothing the public, Govt is taking precautionary measures. (*Mathrubhoomi daily* 28.12.2006)

- **Railway land for Jatropha Farming**

Keeping abreast of its counterparts in the country, the Thiruvananthapuram Railway Division is toying with the idea of leasing land for *jatropha* cultivation. It is reliably learnt that the railway wasteland at Neyyattinkara is being strongly considered for the cultivation of *jatropha* from the seeds of which bio diesel can be extracted.

A *jatropha* cultivation group based in Neyyattinkara - the Chakkala Community Association of India (CCAI), has submitted a proposal to the Railway expressing its willingness to take up the land for *jatropha* cultivation. The association has already come up with the first bio-diesel plant at Neyyattinkara, which is all set to start functioning from January.

The Southern Railway Chennai, has been successfully using its land for *jatropha* cultivation. Also following the footsteps are Raipur, Chattisgarh, Mumbai and Andhra Pradesh. (*The New Indian Express* 28.11.2006)

- **The first Bioresource Nature Park in the State**

The first Bioresource Nature Park in the State will come up at Nilambur in Malappuram district. The project is financed by the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India and State Planning and Economic Affairs. The Bioresource Park is being set up at the eight hectares of land at the sub centre of Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI) adjacent to the Teak Museum in Nilambur.

Being set up with the aim of spreading the message

of bio-diversity conservation and management, the park will help in boosting ecotourism in Nilambur and its nearby areas. "The thrust is on research-oriented education as well as eco-tourism. Different species of plants are arranged in such a way that the visitor won't get bored, said U.M.Chandrasekara, Scientist-in-charge of the sub centre.

The present Butterfly Garden close to the park will become part of Bioresource Centre. Even before the formal inauguration, the park has become a great attraction for people from neighboring areas. (*The New Indian Express* 11.12.2006)

SPECIES OF THIS ISSUE



The Cannonball Tree – Nagalingam (*Couroupita guianensis*)

The Cannonball Tree is a native of Guiana, Sri Lanka and South America. This tree is found to be large and 50-80 feet tall in its native lands. It is said to have special significance in the Buddhist religion. The amazingly complex flower of the Cannonball Tree is also heavenly scented - a cross between a fine expensive perfume and a wonderful flower scent. The flowers, which are borne only on special stems on the main trunk, are orange, scarlet or pink forming racemes upto 3m long.

The reason the tree is called Cannonball is, after flowering, large brown fruit balls are formed, in the size and shape of cannonballs. The "fruit" inside the ball is said to have an unpleasant odor. They mature into large spherical woody fruit 15-24 cm diameter, containing numerous (200-300) seeds.

Grown extensively in temples in India, it is called the 'nagalingam' tree in tamil and malayalam. It is

considered a sacred tree among Hindus because the flower resembles a nagam or a sacred snake on the shiva lingam.

A.K. Sivakumar

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Nature Facts

- o The first turtles appeared during the Triassic period, 245-208 million years ago.
- o Together with saltwater crocodiles, marine snakes, and marine iguanas, sea turtles are the only surviving seawater-adapted reptiles.
- o Sumatran elephants are the smallest of Asian elephants.
- o Ashtamudi Lake has been designated as a Ramsar Site in November 2002.
- o Ashtamudi is the second largest wetland in the Kerala State and deepest among all the estuaries of Kerala with a maximum depth of 6.4m at confluence zone.
- o Project Elephant was launched in 1991-92 to assist states having ranging populations of wild elephants to ensure long term survival of identified viable population of elephants in their natural habitats.

TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

Banning of plastic carry bags below 20micrones – will it be effective?

(We invite your written views and approach to this topic. Good articles will be published in the next issue of this newsletter)

GREEN LIVING TIPS

Welcome to Green Living Tips by WWF-India. In this section, we have compiled some simple and easy steps that you can take to reduce your ecological footprint.

Save Wood and Paper

- Return unwanted mail and ask for your name to be removed from the mailing list.
- Always use both sides of a sheet of paper.
- Use e-mail and e-greetings to stay in touch, rather than faxing or writing.
- Re-use envelopes.
- Always recycle paper after use.
- Share magazines with friends and pass them on to the doctor, dentist or local hospital for their waiting rooms.
- Use recyclable paper to make invitation cards, envelopes, letter pads etc.

ACTIVITIES OF WWF-INDIA, KERALA STATE OFFICE

WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS

1. GE Money Programme

November 14th, being the birthday of Sri Jawaharlal Nehru is celebrated as Children's Day in India. GE Money – India in association with WWF – India organized a special treat for the inmates of the Polio Home located at Thiruvananthapuram. Thirty inmates consisting of physically and mentally handicapped inmates were taken on a One Day Trip to Neyyar Dam. The children belonged to the age group of 5 to 12 years old. Volunteers from GE Money – India and staff of WWF – India, Kerala State Office accompanied the inmates, their warden, staff and helpers. The children were treated to some refreshments. Mr Renjan briefed about the day's relevance and about wildlife and Neyyar WLS. Further on, the children were taken to the Lion Safari Park. After lunch, the children were taken for boating in the reservoir. The children were so happy at getting such a special opportunity to go and see the scenically beautiful area. The volunteers from GE Money – India and WWF – India also had a great time with the children and enjoyed their games and songs.

As part of the ECommunity week long programme, a Film Show was arranged at Gandhi Park, East Fort on 16th November, 2006. The films selected to be screened were Sasya Shyamala Keralam, Jaiva Thalam Nilakkumpol, Gajaraj – A Natural History. With the introduction of ECommunity and WWF-India and GE Money – India by Mr. Renjan, the programme got on to a great start with a very good crowd seating themselves on the lawn to enjoy the programme. But the programme could not be successfully completed as planned, because of the unexpected slight shower.

On the last day of the ECommunity Week 2006 i.e. November 18th, a Painting Competition was organised for school students at the Museum Auditorium, Thiruvananthapuram. About 30 students from upper primary section and high school section took part in the competition. The theme decided for the competition was 'Our Ecosystems'. The participants were given the option to choose from 3 sub categories, mainly Forests Ecosystem, Wetland Ecosystem, Coastal and Marine Ecosystem. The evaluation of the paintings was done by Mr. Godfrey Das and Mr. Lal, Lecturers, Fine Arts College, Thiruvananthapuram. The winners of the painting competition are:

Upper Primary Section

Akhil K.B.(1st Prize), Madhav Sankar (2nd Prize), Abhishek K.P (3rd Prize) Yadu Krishnan (Consolation)

High School Section

Arjun Prasanth (1st Prize), Samji (2nd Prize), Uthamaraj (3rd Prize), Neethu Rajan (Consolation)

The prizes to the winners were later distributed during the Friday Forum on 1st of December, 2006 organized at St. Mary's School, Pattom.

2. ORT Conservation Initiative, 22nd Nov, 2006

Olive Ridley Turtles are an endangered species of turtles included in Schedule 1 of WPA. They are seen along the coasts of Kerala. WWF – India, Kerala State Office got the information from a confidential source that Olive Ridley Turtles (ORTs) are being caught and killed mercilessly in Vizhinjam area of Thiruvananthapuram District. In this regard, a team from WWF – India, Kerala State Office visited the Vizhinjam Harbour area and directly witnessed a ORT being captured and kept upside down on the roadside so that it remains alive and does not escape. But the usual practice is to capture them and tie a rope onto their legs and leave it in the canal running alongside the harbour road. There will be no one claiming ownership, because they realize that, what they are doing is illegal. But many eyes are watching the turtle. Only after they see some prospective buyer do the real faces appear. We could get a full video clipping of ORTs being caught and kept alive in the canal, then being dragged out and mercilessly being cut open and chopped into pieces for its meat.

With this video footage, we consulted various experts like Dr. Lipton of CMFRI, Vizhinjam, Mr. Krishna Pillai, Retd Scientist, CMFRI and an authority on ORTs of Vizhinjam area, Mr. Peter of Independent Fishermen Federation on what could be done forward. It was decided to bring this issue into the limelight by showing this clipping through the main news channels in Kerala. In this regard, WWF approached Asianet News and they were very enthusiastic in taking this up. On 22nd November, 2006 the main news hour of Asianet showed parts of the video clipping with an interview of Mr. Renjan Mathew Varghese, State Director, WWF – India explaining the status of ORTs and the threats faced by its declining population. Subsequently on 23rd, an interview with the Chief Wildlife Warden was also shown on the same matter.

The news clipping was seen by a large population of Kerala, India and abroad because we have got direct feedbacks in this regard. Also Sri Binoy Viswom, Minister for Forests, Govt. of Kerala also happened to see and he has promised that he will take stern action against the culprits.

A direct action is not a possibility because the coastal area is very sensitive. So WWF – India, Kerala State Office proposes to hold a few Awareness Workshops regarding Olive Ridley Conservation along the coasts of Kerala. WWF also plans to network with local turtle conservation agencies like THEERAM and NAITHAL working in the northern districts of Kerala.

3. C.M. Singh Jayanthi Celebrations 30th Nov – 2nd Dec, 2006

WWF – India, Kerala State Office was able to associate with the organizers of the C.M. Singh Jayanthi Celebrations by putting up a Nature Products Stall in the venue at Kanakakkunnu.

4. International Conference on GIS 7th & 8th Dec, 2006

In the International Conference on GIS held at Technopark, Thiruvananthapuram Mr. Renjan Mathew Varghese, could present the paper on 'Identification of Suitable Sites for Waterholes in Protected Areas – A GIS Approach'. The paper and presentation was very much appreciated by the delegates of the conference.

5. Aryabhateeya – Talk on GIS in Water Resource Management 10th Dec, 2006

In the two day seminar 'Aryabhateeya' organized by Swadeshi Science Movement, Mr. Renjan Mathew Varghese delivered a lecture on 'Application of GIS in Water Resource Management'. The programme was attended by about 150 participants, mainly engineering students. Mr. Renjan explained on how modern technological advancements like GIS can be applied for managing our precious water resources.

ENVIRONMENT EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

1. Teachers Training Workshop

WWF-India, Kerala State Office and CPREEC, Chennai jointly organized Teachers Training Workshop on Environment Education at three locations:

- De Paul Public School, Kalpetta, Wayanad on 7th November 2006.
- MES College, Valanchery, Malappuram on 13th December 2006
- Govt. Model Higher Secondary School, Kozhikode on 16th December 2006

The target group were the teachers in charge of Eco clubs under NGC programme.

The workshop at Wayanad was inaugurated by Sri.M.G.George, the Principal of the School in a function presided over by Sri. A.K.Sivakumar, Education Officer of WWF-India, Kerala State Office. Sri.C.Jayarajan Convener of DIMC welcomed the guests, officials from WWF-India and the participants. Sri.George, during his inaugural address appreciated the initiative taken by WWF-India and CPREEC and the teachers who are devoting their time and effort for creating environmental awareness among school children. Inaugural session was followed by technical sessions on *Need for Nature Conservation and Environment Education and How to run Eco Clubs* by Sri.A.Sreejith, Project Officer and A.K.Sivakumar. Thirty six teachers participated in the workshop.



In the afternoon, there was an open session on local environmental issues on which eco clubs can focus followed by preparation of action plan.

The workshop at Malappuram was inaugurated by Dr.H.Hussain, the Principal of the College in a function presided over by Smt.M.Zeenath, Convener of the DIMC (NGC). Dr.Hussain, during his inaugural address mentioned about most of the environmental problems and the drastic depletion of indigenous species of the district. Dr.C.H.Moideen kutty, Staff Secretary of the College and Sri. C.Nayeem, College Union Chairman felicitated the workshop. Inaugural session was followed by technical sessions, open forum on local environmental issues led by Ms. M.Zeenath and action plan preparation. Many teachers shared their experience to help others in initiating similar activities. Most interesting activity was the demonstration of manufacturing of ropes from used plastic carry bags by Sri.Abdul Rasheed of GM UP School, Areembra.

The workshop at Kozhikode was inaugurated by Sri.T.Damodaran, AEO, Kozhikode City in a function presided over by Dr.P.G.Sabu, DIMC Member and Nature Club Adviser of MAMO College, Mukkom, Kozhikode. Sri. M.A.Johnson, DIMC Member of NGC welcomed the guests, officials from WWF-India and the participants. Inaugural session was followed by technical sessions, open forum on local environmental issues led by Sri.Shobheendran, an eminent environmentalist of the district and action plan preparation.

2. Nature Education Camp at Thirunelly from 8th - 10th November 2006

The camp was conducted at Thirunelly forests for Nature Club Members from 8th to 10th November 2006. Thirty six students of Dept. of Economics of VTMNSS College, Dhanuvachapuram, participated in the camp along with 3 teachers.

Mr.Sivakumar, Education Officer, Mr. Sreejith, Project Officer, Sri.Vinayan, Volunteer and Mr.Rajan, Forest Official led the groups during the field trip.

The various activities were (i) *Feel the Kalindi*-Kalindi is the river that flows through Thirunelly

valley and makes the area productive. (ii) Session on Nature Conservation and Environmental protection by Sri.A.Sreejith, Project Officer of WWF-India. (iii) Group discussion to prepare an open questionnaire to conduct a socio economic survey of Thirunelly targeting the local settlers, the tribal people and the merchant community in and around the temple. (iv) Temple visit to have an experience to perceive how the devotional proceedings correlated with nature. (v) Field trip through the semi evergreen forests of Thirunelly was quiet interesting as they could see a herd of Gaurs (*Bos gaurus*), Malabar Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa indica*), Bonnet macaque (*Macaca radiata*), Nilgiri langur (*Presbytis johnii*) and several species of birds and butterflies.



3. Green Gathering at Rajagiri HSS, Kalamassery on 25th & 26th Nov, 2006

The Green Gathering for the district of Ernakulam was organized on 25th and 26th November 2006 at Rajagiri HSS, Kalamassery. The programme envisaged the formation of an active network within the WWF-India affiliated schools to strengthen their Nature Club activities and make them involve in the local environmental issues.

The programme was inaugurated by Sri. Josekutty J. Ozhukayil, an active environmentalist of the district in a function presided over by Fr. Varghese Manikkanamparambil, the Principal of the School. Fr.Jose Alukkal, Vice Principal of the School felicitated the programme. Mr. Sivakumar gave the introductory lecture. Sri.Brusely Kuruvila Thomas, District level Coordinator of the programme proposed vote of thanks.

Technical session on different topics were led by Education Officer and Project Officer of WWF-India, Kerala State Office. Ms.Sreeja and Ms.Shalini, Volunteers of WWF-India and Sri. Brusely Kuruvila Thomas looked after the logistics of the programme. The evening session on local environmental issues was led by Prof. S. Seetharaman, the NGC Convener of the



District and a committed environmentalist. He had very good interaction with the students on the local environmental problems that can be addressed by themselves. The session was very interesting and thought provoking.

4. Nature Watch at Kottayam on 26.11.06

It was organised jointly by WWF-India and Kottayam Nature Society at Indian Institute of Mass Communication Hall on 26th of November 2006. Nineteen nature lovers and experts from different fields participated in the programme. Sri. Sabu Kurien John, Field Publicity Officer, Department of Public Relations, Mr. Sreejith A., Project Officer, WWF - India, Dr. S.V Pradeep, Department of Botany, SRENSC College, Vazhoor, Kottayam, Dr. B. Sreekumar, Ornithologist cum Orthopaedic Surgeon, Kottayam took classes on different topics. This was followed by field visit to observe and study the common species of plants and animals found locally and was led by Dr. Unnikrishnan and Dr. S.V. Pradeep. Towards the end of the programme, the participants shared their experience and interacted with the experts.

5. Nature Club Advisers Meeting for Malappuram and Kozhikode districts on 15th December, 2006

The programme was conducted at St. Josephs College, Devagiri, Kozhikode to plan the monthly activities of the Nature Clubs and to discuss about the Green Gathering for the Districts.

With regard to Malappuram District, Sri.P.Viswanathan of MES Central School, Tanur and Smt. K.M.Deepa, Gems Public School, Kooriyad, Tirurangadi were selected as Coordinators of Nature Club activities in the district. It was decided to organize the Green Gathering programme in the district during 24th & 25th of January 2007 at Nilambur. The meeting decided to organize a Nature Orientation Camp cum Review meeting for Northern Kerala during the months of April & May 2007.

For Kozhikode District, Sri. N.J. Sebastian of St. Joseph's Higher Secondary School, Devagiri, Kozhikode and Sri. Rashid Ali, GHSS, Medical College Campus were selected as Coordinator and Joint

Coordinator of Nature Club activities. It was decided to organize the Green Gathering programme in the district during 26th & 27th of January 2007.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Mr. A.V. George
Mr. Renjan Mathew Varghese
Mr. A.K. Sivakumar

SUBSCRIPTION DETAILS

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5. **Special offer for Students:-** Make a contribution of Rs. 200 per annum and become a Subscriber of WWF-India. Also, get a WWF-India Newsletter, Personalised Subscriber Card, WWF-India Library Membership, Car Sticker and 15% Discount on WWF Merchandise.

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WIND CHEATERS