

Education Reports

Tata Steel Zoological Park commemorates World Forestry & World Water Day at Kuiani village

In order to reach out the inaccessible rural mass and spread out conservation awareness, this year Tata Steel Zoological Park commemorated World Forestry Day and Water day on 21 March 2016 at Kuiani village in Bodam Block, East Singhbhum. On that day, the Zoo Education team arranged a special programme for 100 women and children. They were addressed stressing upon the core subject of "Importance of conservation of forests and water for the survival of human beings". The messages that were shared during the programme involved sensitizing them as to why forests and water are vital to the planet for many reasons. Forests cover more than 30% of the world's land and contain more than 60,000 tree species, many yet to be unidentified. They host and safeguard the planet's biodiversity and act as our natural defense against climate change. They are shelters for more than half of the terrestrial species of animals, plants and insects.

Further they were told that forests also act as a balance to maintain oxygen, carbon dioxide and



Lecture on Importance of conservation of forests and water for the survival of human beings

humidity levels in the air and are vital for protecting watersheds, which supply fresh water to rivers. Yet despite all of these priceless benefits, global deforestation continues at an alarming rate - 13 million hectares of forest are destroyed annually. Further, pictorial depiction of water conservation, water management and water pollution were displayed amongst the participants. They were explained as to how inefficient methods of irrigation of agricultural land, a lot of water is wasted as run off. Water needs are increasing every year and the proven fact is that clean water is not available to 1 out of 5 people on earth. The increased demand in water combined with the pollution of water has had many adverse effects on the environment, growth and economy – mainly on the rural people. Later by using the Zoo museum specimens "Touch & Learn" event was also conducted for them.



Touch and Learn event conducted by using zoo museum specimens

As part of meeting the Aichi Target-1 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity Conservation 2020, the Zoo has taken the initiative to make more and more people aware of the value of biodiversity by organizing various educational activities throughout the year.

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World Sparrow Day actions at Orchha and Maror, Tikamghar, Madhya Pradesh

The little chirruping House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus indicus*) is one of the commonest birds that every Indian comes across. It has been a childhood friend, nesting and singing around humans. As the name 'House Sparrow' suggests, its habitat are human dwellings with small crevices for nesting. But due to recent fast changing human life style have severely affected the nesting sites and food availability for the House Sparrows. This is a serious issue that needs awareness so that we do not lose our little friend as we lost Dodo and other species. There are 26 species of sparrow all over the World while India has 5 species of sparrows which includes migratory and residential species: Migratory species: *Passer hispaniolensis* (Spanish Sparrow); Residential Species: *Passer pyrrhonotus* (Sind Sparrow), *Passer rutilans* (Russet Sparrow), *Passer montanus*



Lecture on House sparrow



Students posing with House sparrow flyers

(Eurasian Tree Sparrow) and *Passer domesticus* (House Sparrow)

In 2010, Nature Forever Society declared 20 March as World Sparrow Day that has been celebrated all over the World with great zeal. Indian Biodiversity Conservation Society (IBCS), Jhansi and Wild Geo Excursion celebrated the day in Orchha and Maror, Tikamgarh (Madhya Pradesh). Students of various schools such as *Shaskiya Prathamik Shala (Maror)*, *Shaskiya Madhyamik Shala (Maror)*, Adarsh Ramraja Public School (Orchha), J.K.Convent (Orchha), Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel School (Orchha) participated in the celebration. Various workshops were organized prior to World Sparrow Day. The aims of the workshop were: to create awareness amongst the students; to teach them how to prepare the artificial bird box; to make provision of safe feeding sites; to engage the students in providing water for the birds and to

encourage the students to install the self prepared bird houses.

To create awareness amongst the students, various lectures were given that included the general information about House Sparrows, their economic role, causes of decline as well as the measures that can bring them back to our courtyard. The students were instructed how to provide water and feed for the House Sparrows. The water and feed should be placed at a safe site away from the predators such as cats. The birds can be fed on grains, breadcrumbs, seeds, rice etc., but never on food items containing salt. The students were given flyers in Hindi with various details about House Sparrows. The students were taught to make their own birdhouses by using the shoeboxes that are usually thrown away as waste.

Students then installed the nest box at their homes. The birdhouses were also installed in various temples of Orchha and Maror so that people see and learn to provide the nesting space to the House Sparrows at their home. The students also planted China Rose



Learning and preparing bird houses out of shoe box



Planting shrubs which are ideal for House sparrow roosting

(*Hibiscus rosa sinensis*) and Kaner (*Nerium indicum*) that are ideal for roosting of House Sparrows. House Sparrows prefer to roost on bushy shrubs so that they are safe and out of the reach of predators. The House sparrows adopted the nest boxes and thus the children were rewarded for their efforts. The schoolteachers (Devendra, Rohit, Ram Lohar, Vijay Shankar Srivastav, Rajendra Kumar Adjariya) supported the students in their initiatives for the conservation of the House Sparrows. The Volunteers (Abhishek Namdev, B.S. Kushwaha, Starling James, Arvind, Saleem, Shashi Kushwaha, Mukesh Kewat) interacted with the students and helped them in installing the birdhouses made by them. **Submitted by: Dr. Sonika Kushwaha, Indian Biodiversity Conservation Society. Email: ibcsforall@gmail.com**

Amazing Astro-Watch and Green Birthdays

Early Saturday morning of 5 March '16 began with a group of youngsters and adults gathered at Sabarmati Riverfront of Ahmedabad city. The group was participating in Astro-Watch organised by Sundarvan as part of nature appreciation on a cosmic level. Armed with flashlights covered in red cellophane paper, our group eagerly looked towards a sky trying to find the North direction. Associated with Astronomy for more than 30 years, our invited guest, Tanmaye Vyas helped them by handing out star charts of that time. The session began with locating the Pole star or *Dhruva*, learning to use the star chart and went on to a discussion about constellations. Telescopic viewing of Saturn was next, as the planet was already on its way to sink below the horizon. The participants were amazed to learn that what they thought was a star with naked eye, was actually Saturn and its rings were also visible through the telescope. The youngsters were bubbling with questions while the other celestial objects were brought into focus of the telescope. Mesmerized by beautiful moon and her craters, the participants were also delighted to see Jupiter with its three natural satellites. The session was concluded with the sun gently rising upon the Sabarmati River, a huge flock of rosy starlings turning and twisting to



Moon adorned in a beautiful crescent and craters during Astro-Watch

make a beautiful murmuration, a feeling of fascination for the colossal universe. During February and March, five green birthday celebrations were also organised at Sundarvan with eco-friendly activities like making greeting cards with handprints, nature trails, artistic animal face painting and very popular with kids, puppetry. A snake awareness programme was conducted for all the guests, under the central theme of zoo as an education platform. Questions, amazement and smiles adorned the tiny tots' faces as they left Sundarvan with their little take-away presents. We express our sincere thanks to our volunteers Dhrumil Shah and Umang Patel for their vital role to run our events smoothly. **Submitted by: S. Sivakumar, Jignasa Patel & Meena Nareshwar, Sundarvan, Ahmedabad. Email: jignasa.patel@ceeindia.org.**



Participants line-up to view Jupiter through the telescope



Kids are thrilled by the close approaching puppet during a birthday celebration at Sundarvan