



Village Kids' Awareness Programme

**Kanha Tiger Reserve
November 2016**

Core Team:
Vidya Venkatesh
Bhavna Menon

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
The idea behind the Village Kids' Awareness Programme.....	4
The Programme	4
Functioning of the programme.....	7
Benefits of this programme	13
Conclusion / what the future holds:.....	13

Village Kids' Awareness Programme, Kanha Tiger Reserve 2016

Introduction

A picturesque reserve dotted with Sal and Bamboo, vast meadows and the golden Barasingha, Kanha Tiger Reserve is perhaps one of the most scenic of parks in the Central Indian landscape. Home to nearly 80-90 tigers, the reserve is also home communities, tribals like the Gonds and Baigas, who form the most important stake holders in the protection of the park in form of 169 villages that surround the reserve in the buffer zone.

Thus, in order to connect with these stakeholders of conservation the Last Wilderness Foundation team embarked on a journey to initiate conservation awareness in a forest which not only houses an endangered species like the tiger but is the last wild scape for the Hard Ground Barasingha as well making it a critical habitat to protect.



Pic 1: The most important stakeholders of conservation

The idea behind the Village Kids' Awareness Programme

Conservation and protection of species in a fast developing world is not easy and promises to get tougher especially since the protection means standing up against our own kind against the decimation of species and the environment. However what makes it possible is, standing up against our own kind by roping in some of our own kind too! This is what our model is based on: working in tandem with your own kind, by roping in the communities that live around the forests, who, if given the right direction and alternative solutions, can form the buffer between development and nature, thereby reducing the blow or impact wildlife otherwise suffers at the hand of man.

The Programme

The Programme, initiated in association with the Kanha Forest Department was undertaken between 17th- 22nd November 2016 covering schools from 5 villages namely: Mukki, Mawala, Nikumbh, Samnapur and Mocha. The number of participants covered in this programme was 125 students.



Pic 2: Off on a safari!



Pic 3: Fun during the safari with the Additional Director, Kanha TR Shri.Khare



Pic 4: Students enraptured by the Gaur



Pic 5: Watching a tigress walk her realm



Pic 6: Students at the Elephant camp



Pic 7: Interacting with tourists during the safari and sharing their experiences

Functioning of the programme

The Students were taken for a safari by the LWF team along with two members of the Forest Department where they were encouraged to be more aware of their surroundings, understand the interconnectedness between organisms and understand the role of the frontline staff in protection of the reserve. Reduction on their dependency on the forest and forest products was also emphasized upon and they were also advised methods which would help minimize human-wildlife conflict by reducing the number of hours a villager spends in the forest during the Mahua, Tendu collection season. An example of one such method was the use of more ‘eco – friendly’ methods like putting a dark cloth under the tree, cementing ‘gobar’ under the tree so when the flowers fall, they will be easy to collect, due to the contrast against the mentioned surfaces. The students were also encouraged to plant more trees in and around their villages and not burn forest patches either for agriculture or for collecting forest produce.



Pic 8: Watching the movie "The Truth About Tigers"



Pic 9: Students at the interpretation center to understand the forest better



Pic 10: De-briefing session after the safari and movie

The safari was followed by a lunch with the students and then a screening of the movie – “The Truth About Tigers” which talks about the tiger as an animal and what can be done in order to protect it. The screening was followed by a number of activities like the Web of life, Environment Ladder and Prey and Predator which encouraged the students to understand the delicate balance of nature which may even affect the survival of mankind if not maintained and games like Wildlife Bingo which helped the students identify the different species and associate it with the ones seen during the safari, thereby making the connect stronger.



Pic 11: Lunch!



Pic 12: Identifying different species in an ecosystem



Pic 13: A game to help identify the delicate balance of nature and the need to maintain it



Pic 14: Web of life to understand the interconnectedness between different organisms



Pic 15: Colouring fun!



Pic 16: Watching a short movie on the Do's and Don'ts of living in proximity to a tiger reserve



Pic 17: A game of Wildlife Bingo to help connect with the species found in the forestHow does the

Benefits of this programme

- 1) Helps in sensitising the students towards wildlife (existing around them) and its importance to their lives.
- 2) Helps the students see and understand the co-relation between conservation of tiger and survival of mankind.
- 3) Involves the locals in conservation, creating contacts for information on poaching, forest fire and any other illegal activities.
- 4) Bridges the gap between the Forest Dept. and communities (if any).
- 5) Imbibes a sense of ownership towards the forest.
- 6) Educates /creates awareness among the students about issues of forest fires, man-animal conflict and dependency on forest products thereby equipping them with solutions to deal with the concerned issues.
- 7) Helps in thinking beyond the daily needs and thinking for long term conservation.

Conclusion / what the future holds

Although there is a positive approach towards the forest as of now, there is still much to do, with the first being maintaining constant touch points with the villagers and keeping them in the heart of the conservation model. There is much that we can still learn from one another and the future vision, as always is having the villagers co-

operate with the Forest Department in safeguarding the forest rather than being/turning antagonistic about these large cats or its realm.



Pic 18: The future of conservation.