



Village Kids' Awareness Programme
Kanha Tiger Reserve
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Village Kids' Awareness Programme, Kanha Tiger Reserve

The Programme

The second leg of the Village Kids' Awareness Programme, Kanha, initiated in association with the Kanha Forest Department, was divided into two parts viz.

- 1) for the students from Class VI-VIII, the 1-day camps were undertaken between 7th- 11th January 2017 covering 5 villages, namely Khajra, Manoharpur, Arandi, Kadla and Kanha-Kisli staff colony.
- 2) for students from Class IX-XII, a 2 nights/ 3 day camp was undertaken between 10th-14th January was for the students of Sijhora and Sarekha villages.

The entire programme was covered under the Anubhuti programme of the Madhya Pradesh Eco-tourism Board (MPEB) and was jointly run by Last Wilderness Foundation (LWF) and the Forest Department, Kanha Tiger Reserve (KTR). The total number of participants covered during the programme was 185.



Pic 1: The students and the team at Mukki

Special visitors

The students had a chance to interact with the Assistant Chief Secretary, Madhya Pradesh Shri. Deepak Khandekar, the Field Director, KTR, Shri. Sanjay Shukla and the Assistant Director, KTR, Shri Surendra Khare. The interaction included question answer sessions with regard to conservation.



Pic 2: Students interacting with the Field Director, KTR, Shri. Sanjay Shukla



Pic 3: Distribution of kits via the Assistant Chief Secretary Shri. Deepak Khandekar

The idea behind the Village Kids' Awareness Programme (VKAP)

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, can form the buffer between development and nature, thereby reducing the blow or impact wildlife otherwise suffers at the hand of man.



Pic 4: Post safari thoughts on forests and conservation

Functioning of the programme

1 day camp: The students were taken for a safari by LWF 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.



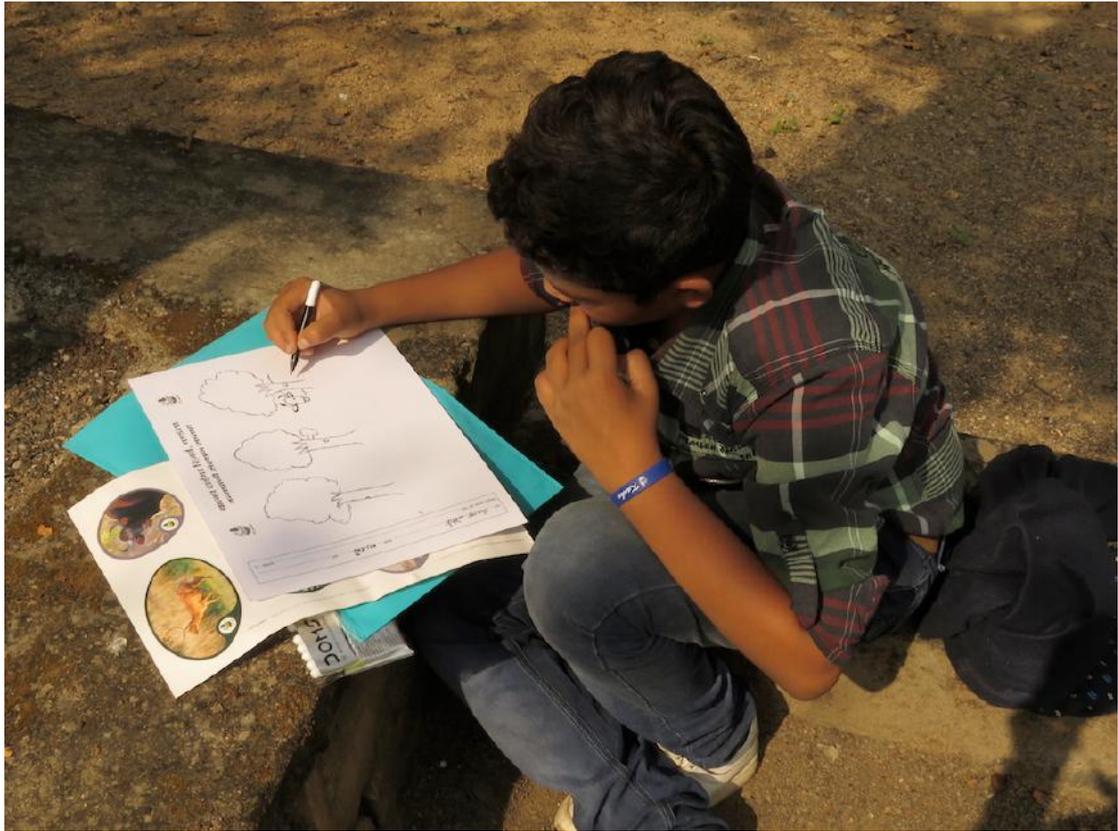
Pic 5: Post safari de-briefing session



Pic 6: Waiting for the movie screening

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.

2 nights/3 day camp: The camp involved safaris for the participating students to understand the forest better, screenings of conservation themed movies, nature trail to understand different tracks and signs and calls of the forest, visit to the interpretation center to know more about Kanha, participating in wildlife games and activities, bird watching and discussions on conservation and the need to understand and protect the forests and the environment.



Pic 7: Conservation and art



Pic 8: A round of Wildlife Bingo game at Kisli



Pic 9: Our volunteer, Sakshi explains the rules of the game



Pic 10: Environment ladder, an informative conservation game

The camp was concluded with cultural programmes organized by the participants and included poems, slogans and thoughts about safeguarding the forests and the denizens living within. KTR Forest Department also provided the students with Nature Education kits to welcome the students into the world of wildlife and help appreciate the same.



Pic 11: The boys ready with their slogans during the cultural programme



Pic 12: Happy lot!



Pic 13: Students at the Mukki Interpretation center



Pic 14: Students interacting with the Assistant Director, KTR Shri Surendra Khare



Pic 15: Students on the Nature trail at Khatiya

Important takeaways from the camp

The participating students from Sijhora as well as Sarekha were not only keen nature enthusiasts, but also frequently questioned the need for conservation and the role they could play to help conservation. The biggest post discussion takeaway for the students was to understand the forest and the animals by helping in dispelling myths about the same. The students were encouraged to create 'myth busting' awareness in their concerned regions so as to help other people also appreciate wildlife rather than fearing it or misusing it thereby leading to their depletion.

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.
- 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.



Pic 16: The future of 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. Nature Education camps are a very good way to engage the students in conservation and should be continued for all villages with special focus on sensitive areas and '*van gram*' (forest villages).