



# **Village Kids' Awareness Programme**

**Kanha Tiger Reserve  
January- February 2017**

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## Village Kids' Awareness Programme January-February 2017



Pic 1: The team with the students

### **What is the objective of the Village Awareness Programme?**

The objective, is to conduct an awareness programme for students from the villages which fall within the buffer area of Kanha Tiger Reserve. As we, at Last Wilderness Foundation, believe that to save the forests and the tigers, we must consider the interests of the people living around and within. They are as much the custodians of the forests as the rest of us and must be given an opportunity to appreciate and understand the forest better, and understand the co-relation between conservation of tiger and survival of mankind which they often miss out on in their daily fight to survive. Hence, it is imperative to conduct an awareness programmes for the people living in these villages.



Pic 2: A bird eye view of our brilliant participants



Pic 3: All aboard!

## Why Kanha Tiger Reserve?

Covering an area of almost 940 sq km, Kanha Tiger Reserve is home to a myriad of species along with charismatic species like the Barasingha, that form a healthy forest and ecosystem and ultimately the foundation basis for the survival of mankind. Thus in order to re-iterate this linkage, students will be exposed to the world of bio-diversity in a prominent tiger reserve like Kanha so as to also emphasize the need for the students to help protect and preserve it and garner a sense of ownership towards the forest by accepting a certain sense of duty towards protecting the forest and denizens living within.

## Programme details

The Village Kids' Awareness Programme conducted between 31<sup>st</sup> January and 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2017 saw participation of 90 students from the villages of Sijhora, Sarhi, Dhanwar and Jaitpuri.



Pic 4: Learning to use the binoculars



Pic 5: Happy faces during the safari



Pic 6: Director, Last Wilderness Foundation, Vidya Venkatesh, de-briefs the students post safari

## How does the programme work?

The Students are taken for a safari by the Last Wilderness Foundation team where they are encouraged to be more aware of their surroundings, understand the interconnectedness between organisms, understand the role of the frontline staff in protection of the reserve, reduce their dependency on the forest and forest products, and finally contribute to the conservation of their reserve in their personal capacity.

This were advised to do, by following a few simple methods like- planting of trees in and around the villages, not setting fire to the forest patches during mahua and tendu collection season and instead using 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. This way, the villagers need not spend more time than required in the forest, thereby minimizing contact with wild animals and reducing potential human-wildlife conflict.



Pic 7: Understanding the location of different villages on a map

Participants are also encouraged to listing down various questions they may have about the forest and the work being done to protect it, following which the team answers the queries put forward and works especially towards dispelling various myths, beliefs they have about animals that may prove detrimental to them.



Pic 8: Assistant Director, Kanha Tiger Reserve, Shri. Surendra Khare interacts with the students



Pic 9: Watching the animals in their natural habitat

Such discussions and interactions are followed by a movie screening on conservation, in this case, 'The Truth About Tigers' that initiates an understanding of the tiger as an animal and what can be done to protect it among the students.



Pic 10: Ashish Bais, a naturalist with Banjar Tola (Taj Safaris), shares his experience



Pic 11: In motion. While playing a game of Prey & Predator



Pic 12: Playing a game of Zip-zap!

## Some revelations

Students from some of the villages were familiar with instances of logging for firewood and setting up of snares in the villages as a solution to crop raiding. Although this revelation was a matter of concern, points like this led to discussions wherein the students were explained the repercussions of such acts on the forest and its denizens and hence such acts should always be avoided in future.



Pic 13: Students put forward their questions about the forest

### **How does the Village Kids' Awareness Programme help?**

- 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

## **Protective measures/ actions provided to avoid man-animal conflicts**

- 1) Avoid grazing of cattle within the forest, unattended cattle can attract tigers towards villages
- 2) To reduce your losses, make sure your domestic animals are well protected in the night in cowshed and when grazing in the day, that an adult is herding them
- 3) Do not leave children alone during the dark hours
- 4) If you are going out alone in the night then sing songs or play songs on the mobile so that the tiger knows it is a human being and not a deer or a prey. If you see a tiger do not chase or throw anything at it, just move away, because otherwise it might attack you in self-defense.
- 5) Do not set fire to forest patches for mahua or tendu collection. Instead use more eco- friendly methods like – sweep the area under the tree, spread a dark sheet or cloth or cement ‘gobar’ under the tree for easier and faster collection, etc.
- 6) Do not set snares or traps for wild animals
- 7) Plant at least one economically important tree like mahua or tendu for every tree felled for the purpose of fuel and household purposes, preferably around villages so that entering the forest is avoided thereby reducing human-wildlife conflict
- 8) Be aware and spread the message

## **Conclusion**

Although the feeling of antagonism towards the forest and animals hasn't peaked yet, there is a need to maintain a touch point with the villagers to further gauge the problems on ground, which could be detrimental to the forest. Constant interaction with the villagers (both students as well as adults) with regard to preventive measures as well as conservation is necessary.