

Education Report

Knowing the Trees, Campus Birds and Exploring the Desert

Sundarvan conducted a nature appreciation event, "KNOW YOUR TREES –Interactive tree-watch" on 7 February 16 in the zoo premises. The programme aimed to encourage children as well as adults, to take an interest in the trees around them. Bright Sunday morning began with games wherein blindfolded participants were told to feel, smell and taste different parts of a tree to understand some of its more interactive characters that we come across in our day to day life. Young and inspiring plant expert, Santosh Yadav was invited to conduct a tree-walk in the zoo campus, during which he engaged the participants with interesting information on various trees, their medicinal value, how they got their names, their ecological importance, dicots-monocots, simple-compound leaves, fascinating stories and more. We received tremendous response and successfully created individuals who urged to us to have a second advanced session especially for them.

The 'Know Your Trees' event inspired young teachers to arrange a session for second graders customised to create awareness among our little naturalists. Students from Mahatma Gandhi International School participated in 'Tree-Watch' programme at Sundarvan aimed to make them understand bark, trunk, branch, leaf, flowers, fruits and seeds mixed with a hands-on learning component, interactive theme oriented games, arts and craft as well as a small take-home booklet to encourage to explore the trees around them. The session went brilliantly as curious students gathered around the Peepal, Mango and Neem as their own case-studies, excitedly reporting the animals interacting



Students learn to trace the leaf and understand patterns



Santosh Yadav interacts with the young participants about the parts of a flower

with the trees, among other things.

Sundarvan registered their zoo campus for the Campus Bird Count (CBC) from 12-15 Feb 16. The CBC is a coordinated effort to document the birdlife in multiple campuses across India and a sub-event of the larger Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). Sundarvan along with Centre for Environment

Education (CEE) conducted orientation programme to interested institutions in Ahmedabad and encouraged them to involve in CBC. Apart from this, amateurs and professional birders were encouraged during all of our outdoor programmes to monitor and upload their data and this led to participation of many young volunteers, teachers, and students from multiple campuses from the

city this year. During the four days, we recorded 27 species in Sundarvan, many of which are resident while some are occasional visitors such as small minivets and white eyes.

On 28th Feb '16, Sundarvan conducted a trip to Little Rann of Kutch (LRK). Contrary to popular belief that the desert is barren of wildlife, participants were surprised to see a good number of migratory birds at LRK. Being one of the remaining habitats of Indian Wild Ass, sighting was assured along with herds of blue bulls. Flock of more than 50 common cranes with adults and juveniles as well as more than hundred demoiselle cranes were seen at the wetland. Other migratory birds in beautiful plumage included Northern shovellers, many waders like Pied avocet, Little Stints, Black-tailed godwits and raptors such as marsh harriers. A soaring griffon vulture and many eagles were sighted ashore. A well-camouflaged nightjar was the prized sighting for everyone. While appreciating nature, we also visited Salt Pans and learned about the harsh life of a desert, the local salt pan workers, *Agariyas* and their problems and tasted some salt before it is refined. Participants were very interested in learning about the invasive *Prosopis juliflora* and the interaction about the various species of animals, migratory routes and plants continued throughout the bus journey back to Sundarvan. Our acknowledgements to Dr Santosh Yadav, Ramjee Nagrajan, Programme Co-ordinator, CEE and Pavan Patel, Director, SOAR Excursions. **Submitted by S. Sivakumar, Jignasa Patel and Meena Nareshwar. Email: sundarvan@ceeindia.org**



The group at Indian Wild Ass Sanctuary Interpretation Centre



Pavan talks about the hardships of life in the desert



Tasting the salt before it is refined at LRK