



Dear Friends,

Welcome to this edition of the E-newsletter of A Rocha, India.



Firstly I wish you all a very happy and Blessed New Year 2011. I take this opportunity to thank you all for your contributions to the success of our activities in the year 2010. A special word of thanks to our Trustees, led by *Rev. Prem Mitra* and my team and volunteers, without whose support we would not have achieved what we did last year. My special thanks to *Gopal, Avinash, Nityanand, Nishant & Bhanu* for their support.

The year 2010 was full of surprises and challenges. We were very successful in our field activities. There was an increase in the number of visitors to our project site and the Field Study Centre at Taralu. The much awaited registration with the Ministry of Home under FCRA came through early in 2010 but we were not very successful in our fundraising and therefore financially the year was not good.

Despite all the hurdles, here we are in another brand new year and we start this year trusting God to lead us through. Several new programs have been planned and we hope to move further in the area of education and community oriented conservation programs at the Bannerghatta National Park. We need your support as we look forward to yet another successful year. Some important events that took place are described for you.

*Vijay D. Anand PhD.,
National Director/CEO*

ASIAN ELEPHANT CONSERVATION PROGRAM AT THE BANNERGHATTA NATIONAL PARK

Habitat usage survey



Human elephant conflict is one of the serious threats to the survival of the Asian elephants across its range countries. There has been a sudden increase in the number of conflict incidents across Karnataka State over the last six months. Its very disturbing to see this trend which is unavoidable due to an ever increasing human presence and activities around elephant habitats. As you are aware we are involved in the resolution of this issue at Bannerghatta Park since 2004. Our research programs have given us a lot of insight into the problem however

continuous monitoring is required in this area due to the dynamics of the issue.



Understanding habitat usage has been studied through *Trail Surveys*, an unique technich adopted by A Rocha India under the initiative of *Research Advisor Surendra Varma* during our early stages of work here. This activivity has been carried out thrice a year to test and ascertain habitat usage by elephants. This provides good logistical support to the Forest Staff helping them to locate elephants and strengthen prevention methods. This exercise is usually done with

the support of volunteers who are trained and are given the opporntnity to carry out this field exercise. Nearly 1000 volunteers have participated since 2004. In 2010 this survey was succsseuffly conducted and the last one was held during December.

Nature Camps



A Rocha India in association with the *Bannerghatta National Park* and the *Bannerghatta Biological Park (Zoo)* has started a series of nature camps since December 2010. These camps are conducted twice in a week. The target groups are school children, college students and Eco development committee members from villages that are badly affected by elephant depredations. Participants numbering 100 take part in this daylong event where they are taught about wildlife conservation through audio/video

presentations. They also get free rides in the lion, tiger and bear safaris and get a free guided tour of the zoo. This program has been successful so far with eight more camps to go. *Research Officer Gopal* has played a very important role in the organizing of this program.

Eco-development Committee

Participatory Forest Management is a management tool intended to protect the forests and manage the non wood forest resources of forests in as sustainable manner with the active participation of Forest Dependent Communities ensuring their livelihood needs. Under this program, Eco-development Committees (EDC) are formed in the Wildlife Divisions. The EDCs are grass root level organizations where forest dependent families are members participating in the planning and implementation of various forestry and community development programmes.



The formation of EDC's is currently underway in Bannerghatta National Park and A Rocha has been invited to assist in setting up the EDC's. Several initial meetings have been conducted and by mid 2011 these EDC's are expected to be functional.

Chille-Tobacco Elephant Barrier (CTB)

The CTB continues to be a big success not only among the local community and Forest staff but also across the state and even in other states of India. The CTB was set up recently in selected places along the forest boundary in partnership with the National Park Authorities. The farmers are enthusiastic about this innovative mechanism which has attracted many visitors in the year 2010. Prominent among them was a high profile forest department team from the state of Chhattisgarh led by the *Minister for Forests Shri. Vikram Usendi* who was joined by senior officers from the state of Chhattisgarh. Also present were *Mr. Ajai Mishra, CCF and Field Director, Project Elephant, Mysore.*



News from the A Rocha Field Study Centre



Through 2010 we continued to receive visitors to our Centre. In the month of November *Ms. Rachel Kochany* from the *British Council* visited our project site to learn about our work. The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations with objectives to build engagement and trust for the UK through the exchange of knowledge and ideas between people worldwide.

She held detailed consultations during her visit and we thank her for her interests in supporting our work.

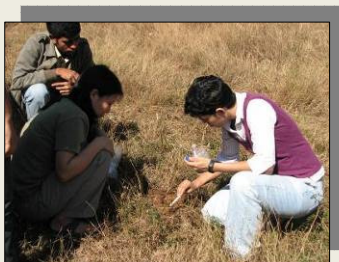
In the month of November, delegates from the *National Conference on plant diversity: prospects and problems of conservation* were taken for a one day field trip to National Park. The field trip was aimed to create awareness on the vegetation diversity of Eastern Ghats. The participants were taught about the fine link between vegetation and human-elephant conflict. The trip was organised in association with the *Kristu Jayanti College.*



We were also happy to welcome students from the *Karnataka Lingayat Educational Society* for an exposure visit to the park. The students enjoyed the morning trek in the park where they were exposed to the various conservation issues related to the park. The day's activities were organised in collaboration with WWF Karnataka unit and in the after noon the students were given presentations on biodiversity and human-elephant conflict by *Mr. M. C. Vinay, Director of WWF Karnataka* and *A Rocha's Dr Vijay Anand*. On the whole the day was very eventful for everyone.



In the month of January we welcomed a group of 6 UG students from diverse Majors such as Medicine, Neuro-sciences, Political Science, Anthropology and environmental Science from *Hendrix College, Arkansas, USA*. They were accompanied by 2 professors – one from the Dept of Political Science and the other from Anthropology. They were in India on a 3 weeks' study tour organised by the *International Center for Management and India Studies (ICMIS)*. During their two day visit to A Rocha they had the opportunity to visit the National Park, crop raided sites and also were able to interact with the local community to get first-hand information on the whole issue of man-elephant conflict and its implications on the Asian elephant population and the local community as well. We express our thanks to *Dr. Rao* and *Mrs. Augusta Paul* for this opportunity to collaborate with ICMIS and Hendrix College.



One PhD student and an intern from the *Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research* underwent field training specifically on elephant dung sampling at the Bannerghatta National Park. The training was conducted by *Dr. T. N. C. Vidya*, Faculty Member and A Rocha's Research Officer Gopalakrishna.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS PROGRAM FOR LOCAL CHURCHES

A Rocha has been on the constant look out for opportunities to teach and engage churches and christian bodies in environmental action. To this effect Dr. Vijay Anand accepted invitations to participate and speak at the following events.



In October Dr. Anand was the speaker at the Ecumenical Youth Conference on Ecological Concerns organised by the *National Council of Churches in India* (NCCI). The conference was attended by about 30 young people, some of whom came all the way from the state of Kashmir. The two day conference was an opener to the delegates who made strong

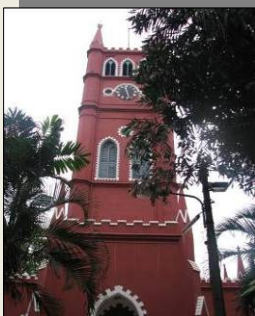
commitments to engage their churches in local environmental action. Also present were leaders from various church denominations and institutions such as the Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary and United Evangelical Lutheran churches in India.



Dr. Vijay Anand and Rev. Prem, Mitra were the speakers at the one day workshop 'Green Yuva Payna' organised by the youth fellowship group of *Hudson Memorial Church* for the youth of churches in Bangalore. The program was attended by about 100 young people from various anglican churches across the city of Bangalore. Apart from the presentations by the A Rocha team, the participants were engaged in group activities and a street

rally at the end of the day, promoting environmental consciousness.

Dawn worship, an early morning time of praise and worship, celebrating creation was organised by Rev. Prem Mitra in the beautiful and serene premises of St. Andrews Church, Bangalore. It was attended by members of the church congregation.



Environment Education



A one day educational program was conducted for the students of *St. Andrews School* located in the urban slum of central Bangalore. Environmental awareness talks were given by A Rocha team comprising of *Avinash Krishnan* and *Nityanand*. A movie on Nagarhole forest was screened during the occasion. Children numbering around 150 attended this program.

As part of the *Seminar Series Gopalakrishna* made a presentation on human-elephant conflict at Bannerghatta to a wildlife enthusiastic group at the *St. Andrew's Church* premises during the month of October. This seminar series is gaining popularity locally which was obvious by the increase in number of people who attended this time.



Dr. Vijay Anand was the speaker at a one day seminar on 'Building a Sustainable Environment' at the *Lady Doak College, Madurai*. The program was organised by the Research Centre and Department of Economics. About 100 Students and staff attended this event.

THANK YOU!

We want to thank our volunteers, Mr. Avinash Krishnan and Mr. Nityanand, for giving their time and helping us in so many ways that made our programs successful.

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A Rocha India is a non-profit organisation relying purely on grants and private donations for its work. Any financial support will be gratefully received. Donations to A Rocha India are exempt u/s Sec 80G of the Income Tax Act 1961.



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