



Environment Education a possible solution to man-animal conflict

A Rocha India has been studying the issues of human-elephant conflict at the Bannerghatta National Park in southern India, in collaboration with the State Forest Department and the Asian Elephant Research & Conservation Centre, Bangalore since 2004. This study is very significant as there has been no earlier scientific efforts to understand the problem and find community based solutions.



The human-elephant conflict has been reported in the Bannerghatta National Park since the 1970's. Elephants are known to cause considerable damage to commercial agriculture property in addition to loss of life in marginalized farming communities. This conflict could possibly be a consequence to many factors which include an increase in the fragmentation and degradation of the elephant habitat.

A Rocha India has been actively involved in investigating this problem. An assessment of the patterns of conflict helped in understanding the intensity and spread of the conflict. The habitat surveys within the park covering different seasons indicated a distinct habitat usage pattern by elephants in relation to cropping in different seasons. Survey visits to the 110 revenue villages around the park helped to understand the elephant visit, its pattern and intensity in the settlements.



All this information enabled the creation of a GIS and Remote sensing based land use map. Our attempts to map the status of different elephant barrier mechanisms helped to assess the efficacies of each mechanism. Three self evolving training programs were conducted where the forest department staff, researchers, personnel from NGO's, students, filmmakers, Information technology engineers, veterinarians and teachers were trained on various aspects of elephant ecology and survey methods. More than 100 persons were trained and were given the opportunity to collect data by accompanying the A Rocha team. This project also opened doors for students from France and USA to visit the park and undertake village based studies.



The present study will continue to get a deeper insight into the problems so as to develop a long-term integrated approach to mitigate crop raiding by elephants and killing of people. As a logical extension of the research work, an environment education program has been planned for the community living around the national park. The elephant-human conflict issue has contributed to the poverty faced by the community. The locals have been depending on this park for generations for their survival and many of their farming lands are inherited. It is harder to change set patterns in older people than to educate children on the need to live in sync with their environment.

We strongly believe that through education the local communities can learn to appreciate the delicate ecological landscape that they inhabit and once again work within its diversity and limitations to conserve the forest and wildlife for a better tomorrow.



The name "A Rocha" is Portuguese, and means "The Rock".

News in brief....

A Rocha India was invited to conduct a workshop on 'Environment & Globalisation' at the international conference on 'Missions & Globalisation', which was held in July 2005 in Bangalore. The conference was attended by around 200 delegates from the SAARC, and was organised by CMS.



An exposure visit to the Bannerghatta project site was also arranged for the delegates.

'Enjoying Creation at Dawn' was organised at the CSI Kothanur Church, Bangalore in November 2005. As part of the program a nature walk and bird watching was organised. For many of the members this program was an unique experience.



A Rocha India's National Director Vijay D. Anand participated at the *MICA Challenge India launch* program during February 2006 at New Delhi. He was also the speaker in the plenary on 'Environment'.

Vijay D. Anand and Prem Mitra were speakers at the *CSI St. Johns Church Men's fellowship* meeting held during April 2006 in Bangalore. The program was well attended and ended with a good discussion on the role of the church in environmental protection.

Earth Day 2006 was celebrated on the 22nd April 2006 with the children of the Summer Bible School, CSI Yelahanka Church, Bangalore. As part of the celebration a rally was taken by the children in the church neighborhood, creating awareness on the importance of trees.



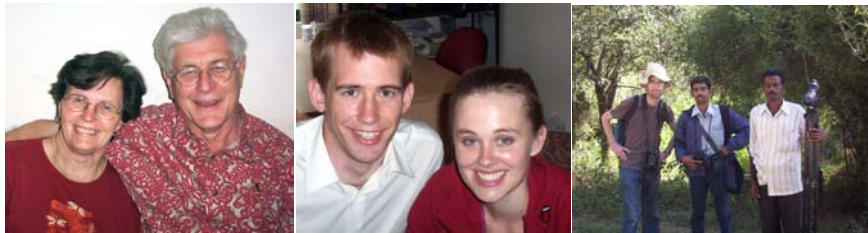
Mark Mariotti, Development Director, A Rocha International accompanied by his wife Marion was on an official visit to India during the end of May 2006. His visit marked several important meetings with key supporters to the work in India in addition to a visit to the Bannerghatta National Park.



Rev. Prem Mitra, the Chair of A Rocha India was invited to speak on environmental issues to the students and staff of the Bishop Cotton Law College, Bangalore in May 2006. This was a good opportunity for us to remind the students on their role as future lawyers to challenge environmental degradation legally.



Visitors to A Rocha India



Left to right: A Rocha members Garry and Adele Wickett (Canada), Peter and Genevieve (UK) and Colin Conroy (A Rocha Lebanon).



Karyn Very our second overseas student worked in the Bannerghatta National Park for 3 months in 2005. Karyn was a undergraduate student from the Agricultural and Technical School of Valabre in France. This is what she has to say of her visit ".....working with A Rocha was an unforgettable experience, and a great opportunity to study the management of wild big mammals, that you can't do in France"

A Rocha is working in 15 countries – Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Ghana, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Netherlands, Peru, Portugal, South Africa, UK and USA.

Meet our volunteers



Shivakumar Arunachalam works for the India Airlines in Bangalore and he has given us a considerable amount of time by volunteering with us in the project site. He says “I consider working with A Rocha a great privilege for it has given me the chance to enjoy the tranquil green. With the number of human deaths due to conflict on the rise every year, its high time some effective way of preventing this is arrived at.



Vinay Kumar “A Rocha has prioritized this agenda and they have put forth various techniques/methods to mitigate this problem. Few of their ideas like the use of scrap railway tracks as barricades, chemical repellents are excellent. The research work through extensive surveys will help in the long run to find a solution to bring harmony between people and elephants in Bannerghatta National Park”.

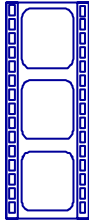


Daniel Sukumar has been volunteering in the work at Bannerghatta National Park. He is the Founder Trustee of CAN (Club for Awareness and Nature study) which is working towards creating awareness among general public and students on nature conservation. Having been associated with A Rocha for more than two years now Danny says “ We are happy working with A Rocha India as it cares for God's Creation. We will extend our fullest cooperation in all its endeavours”.



Pradeep Reddy is a Tour Consultant and a very experienced Naturalist. He has been volunteering with A Rocha since the initial stages of the work in Bannerghatta National Park. Pradeep says “ I am very happy to be associated with the work of A Rocha in India and found their approach and strategies to be very clear. They are truly committed to this work”

Events to watch for....



October 2 2006 (Monday) Wildlife week celebrations.

Screening of the movie

'The Old Elephant Route'

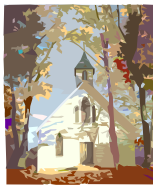
Directed by Philippe Gautier

Venue: United Theological College, Benson Town (Behind Bangalore Cantonment Railway Station) at 6.30 PM.

About the film: As a young forest officer in Assam in the 1930s, P.D. Stracey heard of an ancient migratory route of wild elephants on the border between Myanmar and India through the Chaukan pass. He mentioned it in his book "Elephant Gold" but never saw it himself.

In 2000, Prajna Chowta decides to research the subject with the help of Surendra Varma, Research Officer-Asian Elephant Research and Conservation Centre and Advisor-A Rocha India and Mujeeb Khan, a Karnataka forest department mahout based in Sakkarebailu, Shimoga. Their plan is to find out if elephants from northern Burma can migrate through mountain passes and still communicate with elephants from Assam in India and vice versa.

It is a great challenge to undertake such an expedition as the border has been practically closed since the Second World War and its access is restricted. Even today the area is politically sensitive sometimes dangerous and security remains under army control. This film tells the story of the first expedition.



October 29th (Sunday) Environment Covenant Sunday.

Venue: CSI Yelahanka Church, 5A, Sector A, Yelahanka, Bangalore 560 064. Time: 9.00 AM.

For more details contact Rev. Prem Mitra on 94482 70080.

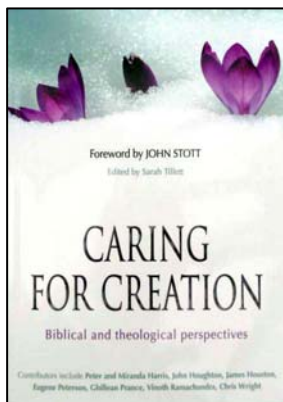


December 2006. 'Art in the Park'

A wildlife theme based art event for children and adults at the Bannerghatta National Park. This event is jointly organised with CAN (Club for Awareness and Nature study), Bangalore. More details on this program can be obtained from our office in the month of November

A Rocha publications

Caring for Creation edited by Sarah Tillett



This book combines twelve biblical reflections from various authors with stories from A Rocha's work around the world. Among other contributors include eminent scientists Sir Ghillean Prance, Professor RJ Berry, Sir John Houghton and A Rocha's own Peter and Miranda Harris and A Rocha India's Vijay D. Anand. It's a great book to pass on to anybody who wants to explore the biblical basis for A Rocha's work.

A Rocha Conservation Science Review 2003-2005

Foreword

We are glad to present the first Review of A Rocha's work in conservation science around the world. The stories from eleven countries in four different continents celebrate a small but illustrative cross-section of the tremendous diversity, beauty and importance of habitats and wildlife to be found on our planet. They also bring within one set of covers a snapshot of the remarkable cultural and social diversity of approach made possible by Christian communities responding to the current crisis that these same habitats and species face. Strong relationships developed within this world-wide family of A Rocha initiatives are bringing real benefits as methodologies and lessons learned in the field are exchanged. This report aims further to contribute to this process, especially as we seek also to partner with an increasing range of organisations around common conservation goals.....

Will Simonson, Scientific Director &

Peter Harris, International Director



Donations to A Rocha India are exempted u/s 80G of the Income Tax Act, 1961

A Rocha's five core commitments:

Christian: Underlying all we do is our Biblical faith in the living God, who made the world, loves it and entrusts it to the care of human society.

Conservation: We carry out research for the conservation and restoration of the natural world and run environmental education programmes for people of all ages.

Community: Through our commitment to God, each other and the wider creation, we aim to develop good relationships both within the A Rocha family and in our local communities.

Cross-cultural: We draw on the insights and skills of people from diverse cultures, both locally and around the world.

Cooperation: We work in partnership with a wide variety of organisations and individuals who share our concerns for a sustainable world.

Team

Dr. Vijay D. Anand, *National Director* * Surendra Varma, *Hon. Scientific Advisor* * Dr. K. S. Murali, *Sr. Consultant* * Hari Nair, *Consultant* * Baruk S. Jacob, *Coordinator & Editor* * Gopala Krishna S.P, *Research Assistant*.

